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**An Exploration of
Homosexual Identity Formation
in
Gay Men from Heterosexual Marriages**

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Dissertation submitted to the University of Chester for the Degree of Master of Arts (Clinical Counselling) in part fulfilment of the Modular Programme in Clinical Counselling.

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Abstract

This study explored identity formation and the 'coming out' process of gay men who had been heterosexually married. The participants explored their sexual identity development, their marriage, and their coming out as gay to themselves and to others in a semi-structured interview. The interviews were analysed through a heuristic enquiry and a phenomenological approach that honoured the unique perceptions and interpretations of the world that the researcher and participants grew up in and became acculturated to. The research supports the current literature with regard to suicidal ideation and fear about coming out: these are not a thing of the past and remain a problem for those who internalise their homophobia. The research highlighted a gap in the literature surrounding the impact a child may feel when one of their parents comes out from a heterosexual marriage. The implications for counselling practice and training were also discussed.

Key words: Coming out, gay, heterosexually married, homosexual, identity, societal influence.

Declaration Page

The work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any qualification or course

Signed

Name Trevor Newton

This research is dedicated to

Ben who, at several points in his life, thought suicide a better solution than coming out to himself and society.

Ben hid. He was frightened of his parents, the society he found himself growing up in, and frightened of his feelings for other boys. He knew it was wrong. He continued to stay in hiding throughout his adolescence in 70's Scotland, where it was illegal for him to act on his feelings for other boys.

Ben grew up alone, isolated from other gay boys and men who might otherwise have supported him in developing his gay identity. He buried his gay identity because he lived in a society that made him too afraid to believe in himself, to be himself, to be gay. So Ben got married, had children, and remained in hiding for over twenty years.

After decades of self-neglect, of being emotionally bullied and abused by society, Ben started to dare to acknowledge his thoughts, feelings and desires for another man. Eventually, he found the courage to free himself from the chains and shackles that society had placed on him. He found the courage to identify himself as gay.

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List of Definitions

Gay Affirmative Therapy: aims to self-actualise those who are gay or lesbian, and those around them, by recognising, exploring and overcoming psychological dysfunctions surrounding the journey to full expression of one's core identity (Mepham, 2008, p436).

Gay Conversion Therapy (also known as Sexual Reorientation Therapy, or SRT): is the attempt to change, or reorient, one's sexual orientation from same-sex-oriented to opposite-sex-oriented (i.e., heterosexual) or at the very least reduce one's same-sex thoughts, feelings, or behaviours (Maccio, 2010, p442).

Heterocentrism: assumptions and processes embedded in mainstream society and its institutions that imply human beings are naturally heterosexual and that heterosexual lifestyles are the normal standard against which those of sexual minority people should be compared in order to be understood and evaluated (Shernoff, 2007).

Heteronormative / Heterosexism:

- (1) the idea that only heterosexual orientation is legitimate, and homophobia as a series of prejudices and discriminations toward lesbian, gay male, and bisexual (LGB) people because of their sexual orientation. (Ciliberto & Ferrari, 2009, p610)
- (2) heterosexism assumes the supremacy of social practice, cultural structures and idioms related to heterosexuality (King et al., 2003, p43)

- (3) the system by which heterosexuality is assumed to be the only acceptable and viable life option (Perlman, 2004, p52)
- (4) Also known as heterosexism, Institutional Homophobia: in which social structures discriminate against lesbian, gay and bisexual people. (Davies, 1996b, p42)

Homophobia: denotes negative views towards homosexuality rather than a phobia or fear of homosexuals, and is similar to the popular use of xenophobia (Rowen & Malcolm, 2003, p79).

Internalised homophobia:

- (1) shame & guilt surrounding homosexual thoughts, feelings and behaviour (Davies, 1996b, p34)
- (2) when lesbians, gay or bisexual people fear or loathe their own or others' homosexuality (Davies, 1996a, p42)
- (3) fear, denial and dislike of my own homosexuality (McMichael, 2000, p69)

Mixed Orientation Marriage, where one of the couple is straight and the other is gay (Yarhouse & Kays, 2010, p77).

Passing: a deliberate policy of hiding your homosexual orientation and presenting yourself as heterosexual (Adams & Phillips, 2009, p968; Maccio, 2010, p444)

Chapter One

Introduction

"You're here to observe society from a different vantage point, discover the limits of the status quo, try alternatives, and then report back to the whole"

(Stowe, 1999, p226)

Background

I grew up knowing that I felt attracted to men, and that this love was illegal. Although no longer illegal in the UK, Schippers (2000) reports that societal homophobia is deeply rooted in western culture.

This dissertation is an exploration of the personal biographies of gay men who, like myself, have been heterosexually married. It is a heuristic inquiry, a reflexive account, that acknowledges that the researcher and participants have built up a perception of the world through their personal history.

According to Moodley and Murphy (2010), the 'big 7' socio-cultural identities or categories of gender, race, class, sexual orientation,

disability, religion, and age have been extensively researched to provide an understanding of the oppressive experiences of people who identify with the "big 7" categories. Although homosexual identification formation has been the subject of research since the 1970's, according to Higgins (2002) there has been an absence of sound theoretical arguments to explain gay men's heterosexual marriages. Bates (2010) is a rare example of research in this field, but focuses on lesbian and bisexual women from heterosexual marriages, rather than gay men. Blais, Collin-Vézina, Marcellin and Picard (2004) argue that the gay population is still today misunderstood and marginalised, but this is more so for a minority group within a minority, such as gay men from heterosexual marriages. Stowe (1999) advises that coming out is the self-chosen rite of passage that all gay men have in common, and Langdridge (2008) adds that gay men from heterosexual marriages have often experienced a long period of foreclosure, where they have denied to themselves who they really are.

Counsellors are required to ensure their own competence in a given field, according to the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence, as stated by Evans and Bor (2005) but this contradicts an "I already know as much as I need to about that" reaction from some counsellors, reported by Mephram (2008, p436). Davies (1996b) contends that Roger's core conditions are not sufficient when dealing with gay men because of their experience of living with a stigmatised, homosexual identity, that Isay (2009) suggests straight counsellors have little knowledge of, and that Blais et al. (2004) advise counsellors ought to possess. However, as Moodley and Murphy (2010) argue, counsellors need to understand the

subjectivity of minority identity and that each client will have made sense of the social structures around them in a personal and unique way.

Aims & Rationale

Just as Thompson (1994) described how Jews take on the responsibility to educate society about Judaism, gay authors have written about their experiences of coming out and being gay. Stowe (1999) suggests that, as gay men, we have experienced society from a different vantage point and have a duty to report back what we have observed.

My aim in researching this topic is, in line with Timulak (2008), that it will inform fellow counsellors in their practice. The research is a phenomenological study of the participants' worlds and, as Mearns and Thorne (2007) remind us, counsellors need to be attuned to their client's experience and perception of reality.

Next Chapter

In Chapter 2, I will describe the literature review for this study, sorted into the themes and subthemes that made sense to me in the light of the participants' stories.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

"So, here we are, all of us, poor bewildered darlings, wandering adrift in a universe too big and complex for us, clasping and ricocheting off other people too different and too perplexing for us"

Carl Rogers

(Rogers, 1970, p110)

Introduction

Brettelle (2008) and Hart (1998, 2001) advise on the types of literature to search to ground the study, and Flick (2009) advises the researcher to determine what is already written about the social situation: what is already known about the people to be interviewed. Although it was relatively easy to find research on homosexual identity formation, it tended to be focused on those who had not formed long-term heterosexual relationships. There was less literature to be found on how homosexual identity is formed in gay men who choose to marry heterosexually before their homosexual identity comes to the fore, but

this literature included articles by Alessi (2008), Bates (2010), Blais et al. (2004), Higgins (2002, 2006), Rowen and Malcolm (2003), and Yarhouse and Kays (2010). I also included gay authors of grey material (or less academic texts), in my literature review because these authors have offered rich insights into my research into what it is to be gay.

Fuller details of the above search strategy can be found in appendix 1.1.

Identity Formation

Life-span development models by Freud, Erikson and Piaget, amongst others, include the assumption that people develop heterosexual identities (Chernin & Johnson, 2003; Davies, 1996c; Erikson, 1998; Glover, Galliher & Lamere, 2009; Hall, 2003). As a result, several researchers have developed homosexual identity development models (Chernin & Johnson, 2003; Davies, 1996c), amongst these are Cass, Troiden and Cox & Gallois's Social Identity Models (Bridgewater, 1997; Chernin & Johnson, 2003; Emert & Milburn, 1997; Giertsen & Anderssen, 2007; Kort, 2003a).

According to Adams and Phillips (2009), Bates (2010), Langdridge (2008) and Ohnstad (2009) the CASS model for homosexual identity formation (Cass, 1984; Kort 2003b; and see appendices 1.2 and 1.3) is one of the most widely known and well-used models. However, several researchers have criticised this model because the assumption of heterosexuality makes application of these theories to homosexuals difficult and, at worst, inaccurate and incomplete (Isay, 2009; Morgan & Morgan, 2011; Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2011; Rowen & Malcolm, 2003). Davies (1996c)

adds that the model assumes a binary solution to sexual identity, that a person is either heterosexual or gay. The CASS model (and others) is 'Euro-American, middle-class, well-educated gay'-centric and does not represent gay men with cultural identities (Adams & Phillips, 2009; Rowen & Malcolm, 2003) that are better modelled by two-spirit native American berdache (Adams & Phillips, 2009), Latino and Asian-American experience (Rowen & Malcolm, 2003), and Samoan Fa'afafine (Schmidt, 2004).

It has been suggested by Moodley and Murphy (2010) that in order to understand the subjective nature of identity, the "big 7" socio-cultural identities (gender, race, class, sexual orientations, disability, religion, and age) need to be taken into consideration. Indeed, Lago (2006) cites a number of minority identity models that describe the "big 7" including Helm's White Racial Consciousness, Phinney's Adolescent Ethnic Identity, Cross's Black Identity, Kim's Asian-American, and Arce's Chicano, as well as feminist, biracial and disability developmental models. All of these are criticised for their simplification, in that they fail to take into account that multiple minority identities do not exist in isolation with each other (Lago, 2006; Lewis & Phoenix, 2004; Moodley, 2003).

Irrespective of identity models, the society that we live in teaches us how to react to situations and events. These teachings are learnt, they are not intrinsic to the individual. Research demonstrates that children pay huge attention to what their parents, teachers, elder siblings, other adults, television (Furnham & Saito, 2009; Giertsen & Anderssen, 2007; Morrison & Bearden, 2007), friends and relatives say to them. Each child constructs

their own understanding of the world in which they live, and this means that no two people experience the world in exactly the same way.

Researchers into identity formation report that early in their development, gay boys begin to recognise within their identity something that is “different” from their friends and family around them (Adams & Phillips, 2009; Ellis, 2008; Sue & Sue, 2003). Cass (1984) explains that this is Identity Confusion: they do not really comprehend what is going on for them, and Kort (2006) adds that they cannot express in words what their feelings are about.

Isay (2009) describes how a boy may be more sensitive, interested in aesthetics or less inclined to join in the games that boys play, whereas Kort (2004) and Sullivan (1996) report how they may identify with their feelings that they are attracted to boys in a way that they should feel towards girls, and that there must be something wrong with them for having these feelings. Davies (1996c) adds that these boys often have a sense of ‘difference’ for many years before they begin to understand that ‘difference’ as gay.

Coming Out To Self

Homophobia is a major societal influence on someone who is trying to come to terms with his sexuality. According to Sullivan (1996), by the time a boy understands that he is gay, he has already assimilated society’s homophobic attitudes towards homosexuality into his being. Cass (1984) adds that those homophobic attitudes include ignorance and

prejudice in the family, school, university, religion, health care and workplace, as well as legislation against homosexuals. Homophobic attitude *is* societal oppression. Adams and Phillips (2009), Heath (2009), and Ohnstad (2009) add that societal oppression emphasises the normalcy required of individuals to identify as heterosexual.

In addition, Moodley and Murphy (2010) cite research that demonstrates the oppressive experiences of people across all the “big 7” categories. In eighty countries homosexuality is illegal, and in five countries it is punishable by death (Home Office, 2011; ILGA, 2009). The research evidence that coming out is easier in contemporary society is mixed, and although societal influences around homosexuality in industrialized countries have changed profoundly the last 20 years, this is not the case in the 42 Commonwealth countries that still retain homophobic legislation (Giertsen & Anderssen, 2007; Home Office, 2011; Ohnstad, 2009), nor in several Central and Eastern European countries, where there is still strong political and societal opposition to homosexuality (Stulhofer & Rimac, 2009).

Chernin and Johnson (2003), Kort (2006), and Sullivan (1996) report that the impact of homophobic societal influence is for the gay boy to isolate himself and hide his feeling of difference from others for fear of rejection and ridicule. Cass (1984) adds that as he begins to see the difference between himself and his heterosexual peers, he is faced with an increasing sense of alienation. He moves from being aware that “something is wrong” (Langdridge, 2008, p25), to “bewildered and

confused" (Cass, 1984, p147) and agonised (Sue & Sue, 2003). Isay (2009) adds that he does not want to be different, he does not want to be gay. He somehow instinctively knows that he cannot share his feelings with parents or friends (Kort, 2006; McNaught, 1998; Norton, 1997; Rosario, Schrimshaw, Hunter & Braun, 2006; Signorile, 1993; Sue & Sue, 2003; Sullivan, 1996), nor count on support from gay subculture or men (Healy, 1996).

The fear, shame and guilt that some gay boys feel are a learned response to the societal pressure that they must develop into heterosexuals. Kort (2008), and Sue and Sue (2003) describe that their desire to keep their homosexual ideation secret is because they fear rejection if they were found to be gay.

Although there are some gay boys that do not feel the full force of oppressive societal influences, Sullivan (1996) reports that these are the lucky minority. In contrast, Bates (2010), and Emert and Milburn (1997) report that family norms and societal expectations hinder identity development for many gay men, and Isay (2009) describes the developmental task in all adolescents to develop a sexual identity, but that a heterosexual, not homosexual, identity is assumed. Kort (2006) and McNaught (1998) describe how what these boys wanted above all else was to please their families, friends and society at large by doing what was 'right'. McNaught (1998, p14) adds that these boys could not trust that they were lovable because they believed what society had taught them: that their sexual feelings were "sick, sinful and unnatural".

The lasting impact on a gay man of homophobia is, as Davies (1996b) describes, the awareness that some sections of society wished they did not exist. Kort (2006, 2008) and McNaught (1998) go further than most in the field and describe heteronormative, homophobic upbringing as "covert cultural sexual abuse". McNaught (1998) asks us to consider what the reaction would be from today's society if two teenagers of the same sex were forced to hold hands, slow dance and kiss. Kort (2008, p70) describes how "covert cultural sexual abuse" leads to four core beliefs:

1. "As a gay male, I am basically a bad and unworthy person
2. If people knew I was gay, no one would love me
3. If I have to depend on others, my needs are never going to get met
4. This world is dangerous to me as a gay man"

Adams and Phillips (2009) state that a gay man who does not like his emerging homosexual identity will try to reject himself. Langdridge (2008) adds that by doing so, he creates a prison out of the building blocks that society has provided and he may lock himself away for years. This prison is called 'the closet', and is described by Cass (1984) as foreclosure. Cass (1984) adds that a tragic consequence of homophobia is that many gay men live their lives for many years pretending to be something that they are not. Isay (2009, p84) reflects this tragedy when he reports that Tchaikovsky said after his marriage in 1877, "All that is left is to pretend. But to pretend to the end of one's life is the highest torment."

Gay men marry for many reasons. Cass (1984), Higgins (2006) and Wolkomir (2009) report that the majority of gay men who marry

heterosexually do so because they cannot accept their homosexuality, and to demonstrate that they are straight. Heath (2009) and Isay (2009) add that they see their homosexuality as bad, sinful, or sick, and hope that marriage will cure them. Although Higgins (2006) and Isay (2009) report these men may have a high level of internalised homophobia¹, Yarhouse and Kays (2010) and Wolkomir (2009) advise that gay men marry for a variety of reasons, including love for one's spouse, a desire for companionship, to help resolve their sexual identity conflicts, before they have identified that they are gay, because of family or societal pressures to marry, or because they want a spouse and children.

Ohnstad (2009) reports that 20% of lesbians in their sample had attempted suicide at least once and this is consistent with the study by Plöderl, Faistauer and Fartacek (2010) who reported a rate of 18% suicide attempt amongst respondents. However, there is an absence of research into the numbers of attempted suicide amongst gay men who heterosexually marry.

Coming out to self, can be a long and painful process of readjustment for the heterosexually married gay man. Chernin and Johnson (2003) and Wolkomir (2009) report that he has to lose his heterosexual status and privilege, that was based on societal expectations and reinforced by the family. As Rogers (1970) tells us, he has to take the risk of being more like his real self to others before his individual loneliness can be resolved.

¹ Internalised homophobia is shame & guilt surrounding homosexual thoughts, feelings and behaviour. See page vii for further details

Coming Out to Others

Cass (1984) defines coming out as the journey that a man takes when his assumed heterosexual identity is replaced with a homosexual one. While Bridgewater (1997) states that coming out involves disclosure to self as well as to others, Malcolm (2008) argues that for men who have been previously married, the fact that they have a wife and children, can make this more challenging, and Davies (1996c) adds that coming out can be protracted because of their fear of rejection. Adams and Phillips (2009) add that these men need to dismantle their closet, so that they no longer conceal who they really are. As President Obama (The Huffington Post, 2010) declared, "What happens next depends on him, his family, as well as his friends and his teachers and his community".

Bridgewater (1997) and Ramer (2005) argue that coming out is a major rite of passage, while Malcolm (2008) and McNaught (1998) add that there are psychological gains to be had as a result, which Kort (2003a, p26) supports, stating that by coming out, a gay man acknowledges "who he is romantically, spiritually, emotionally and psychologically". In coming out to others, Rogers (1970) argues that by disclosing his real self to others, his internal shame, loneliness and estrangement dissolves and he discovers that others can like him for who he is.

Spargo (1999) adds that while coming out of the closet is personally liberating, it reinforces society's heteronormativity as well as marginalising those remaining in the closet. Adams and Phillips (2009) and Blais et al. (2004) remind us that coming out is not a one-off event,

and that every day, a gay man has to decide who to come out to and who to pass², or remain in the closet, with. Although Malcolm (2008) cites research evidence that 'passing' carries a psychological burden, Henrickson, Neville, Jordan and Donaghey (2008) reported statistics from a study on disclosure and 'passing' with high non-disclosure rates: 35% of respondents had disclosed to everyone whereas 0.8% had not disclosed to anyone and intended that to remain the case; 46.3% had disclosed to siblings, 44.4% to their mothers and 33.7% to their fathers, and 34% to extended family relations.

Erikson (1998) suggests that sexual exploration and experimentation is an integral part of identity development for every individual that usually occurs in teenage years. Whereas, a gay boy's experience of sexual exploration and experimentation may occur much later if there has been a period of foreclosure (Bradshaw, 1991; Chernin & Johnson, 2003; Davies, 1996c; Grov and Bimbi, Nanin & Parsons, 2006). Cass (1984) and Kort (2003a) report that gay men may experiment with anonymous sex during stage 2, Identity Comparison, and Kort (2003a) suggests that before physical contact, they may explore internet chat rooms.

Higgins (2006) reports that the evidence as to when this experimentation takes place is inconclusive – it could happen before, during or only after the breakdown of the marriage. This is possibly because, as Davies (1996c), Isay (2009) and Signorile (1993) suggest, sexual experimentation is seen as immoral, promiscuous and despicable.

² to pass means to deliberately present yourself as heterosexual. See page vii for details

Additionally, Higgins (2006) suggests that sexual experimentation during marriage can lead to a unique range of issues because of the internal conflicts between personal and public identities.

A gay man coming out to his wife will often mean the collapse of his social framework. From his work with clients, Isay (2009) tells us that he might be in an unsatisfying marriage and is exhausted by the need to 'pass' as straight to his family, friends and colleagues. Isay (2009) and Yarhouse and Kays (2010) report that he has to choose between marriage and his emerging authentic sexual self.

Wolkomir (2009) advises that a wife is likely to be shocked to discover that her husband is gay, and Alessi (2008) reports a wide range of possible reactions from the wife: desire to protect the marriage, perform mixed orientation marriage³ negotiations, demand impregnation as a pre-requisite to separation, encouragement of extra-marital homosexual sex for the husband, non-contested collapse of the marriage, outing the husband to family & friends, and denying access rights to the children.

Yarhouse and Kays (2010) report that some couples may try to repair the marriage through gay conversion therapy⁴, but there is a large base of evidence to suggest that 'curative therapy' is ineffective and should not be offered (Balick, 2010; Daniel, 2009; Davies & Neal, 1996; Independent, 2009; Mepham, 2008), while Isay (2009) suggests that suicide is the

³ a mixed orientation marriage is where one of the couple is straight and the other is gay. See page vii for further details

⁴ gay conversion therapy is the attempt to change sexual orientation from same-sex to opposite-sex. See page vi for further details

solution for some men.

Kort (2006) tells us that heterosexually married gay men regret many things but they do not regret having their children, but Henrickson et al. (2008) report that gay men don't have to be heterosexually married to have children. They report that in a study, 18% of respondents had at least one child before they identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual, and 11.6% reported having at least one child afterwards, that more than 56% said their children had not been disadvantaged as a result of their parent's sexuality, but that 20.1% said that there had been problems at school. There has been little research into coming out to your own children as gay, and Goldberg (2010) refers to studies on children who are being raised by same-sex parents rather than in a mixed orientation marriage.

Rossi (2010) suggests that coming out to your parents is one of the hardest acts in asserting your individuality, and Giertsen and Anderssen (2007) argue that coming out to parents is often delayed because of the fear of a negative response. McNaught (1998) adds that his experience is that most gay men feared that their parents' love was conditional on their being heterosexual.

Kort (2003a) tells us that when the son comes out, the family jump into the closet because they now have to face the fact that their child is gay, and that can be just as difficult for the parents, as it had been for their son to deal with. Signorile (1993) adds that some gay men fail to recognise what they are asking of their parents, and expect them to come

to terms with his sexuality overnight. What these parents must do first, however, as Chernin and Johnson (2003) report, is to grieve for their anticipated loss of their son's marriage and children before they can accept him as gay. Rossi (2010), reports that some men don't come out to their parents, deciding that it is none of their business and Kort (2003a, p48) tells us that not coming out to you parents is secrecy, "and as Alcoholics Anonymous says, *secrets keep us sick*".

McNaught (1998) suggests that there are many gay men at work who are afraid to share their true identity with their work colleagues. Pointon (2007) describes the experience of Sandi Toksvig, a BACP vice-president, who was told that she would never work again, when she came out in the press. Sandi had to ask herself which was more important: the honesty of her life or the work that she absolutely loved doing: Sandi's answer was "the honesty of my life". Lyons, Brenner and Lipman (2010) state that workplace discrimination of gay men does exist and Stonewall (2011) reports that although there is the Equality Act in the UK to protect gay workers, some places of work are more gay-friendly than others. The right to come out at work is a necessity not a 'nice-to-have' option: for a gay worker to nominate his same-sex partner as an emergency contact, for example, he has to come out to line managers and HR (University of Chester, 2008).

Gay Society

Cass (1984) reports that when a gay man reaches stage 4, Identity Acceptance, he can expect increased contact with gay subculture,

adopting a more accepting view of his identity and building up a network of gay friends. Although Cass reports that this is quite a stable time for most gay men, Bates (2010) reports that they now have to work out who they are in gay society, which gay lifestyle they wish to adopt, explore their new identity and test their attitudes. Higgins (2006) argues that this is not a stable time, as they are more likely to have problems adjusting to the gay world because of their late arrival on the 'scene', their need to learn new social skills, their need to reconcile past fantasies with current reality, and to integrate their 'gay' and 'father' roles. Campbell and Whiteley (2006) state that they often gravitate towards a big city in their search for other gay men and a gay subculture, but McNaught (1998) adds, that for many, their isolation doesn't end.

Cornett (2008, p205) and Thompson (1994, p261) argue that some men find themselves overwhelmed by the promiscuity and freedom of sex that is the gay lifestyle, and this induces further homophobic anxiety, inner shame, guilt and self-loathing. Shernoff (2007) adds that the gay man from a heterosexual marriage is likely to have assumptions and values around sex, based on his heterosexual experience, that are at odds with the casual and anonymous sex and open relationships that are the norm in gay lifestyle. As Kort (2003a) describes, he is the oldest teenager on the scene and has to go through the sexual experimentation stage decades later than some of his counterparts. And Campbell and Whiteley (2006) report that he needs to re-write his heterosexual script in terms of how to negotiate sex, what kind of sex he wants, what are his rules of sexual engagement and how to maintain relationships.

Kort (2006) suggests that integration into gay society means finding a way of belonging, and sense of society, with other gay men in non-risky, non-sexual ways, rather than at the sauna. Thompson (1994, p92) adds that it is about accepting more parts of it than rejecting, and that it depends on the individual's willingness to explore and overcome his history. Thompson continues that integration into gay society is not about 'grabbing a man and heading for the suburbs' to become a "middle-class, hetero-imitative assimilationist".

Just as Thompson (1994) argues that a Jew is taught to take responsibility to educate society about who Jews are, and that he is also taught to support one another and take care of each other, Adams and Phillips (2009) tells us that during stage 5, Identity Pride, a strong sense of group identity is developed through a growing commitment to lesbian and gay issues. Cass (1984), Kort (2003a) and Langdrige (2008) report that Identity Pride is about adolescent rebellion, anger and confrontation with the homophobia of the heteronormative⁵ establishment, disclosure at work, seeing the world as 'gay' and 'non-gay', getting involved in gay politics and organisations, and possibly being seen as 'too gay' by straight acquaintances. Additionally, Kort (2003a) argues that Identity Pride is a necessary step for gay men in their journey of self-actualisation. Lady Gaga (Diverso Toscana, 2011) states that gay pride is needed because

⁵ heteronormative: the idea that only heterosexual orientation is legitimate. See page vi for other definitions

homophobia⁶, anti-gay violence and bullying still occur today. Thompson (1996) adds that gay pride is about trying to equalise the human rights of gay people worldwide, to stamp out the death penalty in countries simply because of the gender of the person you love.

Gay pride is about challenging self as well as others. Thompson (1994) argues that gay men need to accept the drag queens that take rigid societal expectations and turn them on their head. Thompson (1994) adds that it is about moving beyond 'passing' as straight and becoming more comfortable with people knowing that you are gay. Heath (2009) contends that gay pride is about overturning the power of heterosexuality that makes gay men and same-sex couples invisible to society.

Integrated Self

Cass (1984) asserts that the final stage, Identity Synthesis, is when a gay man no longer hides his sexual orientation, when disclosure is no longer an issue, and when public and private selves are integrated into one identity. Davies (1996c) agrees fully with this last point, and adds that, unlike in their marriages, the relationships these men have are now characterised by openness, trust and freedom. This is echoed in Sullivan's (1996) words on the personal integrity of being honest and true to one's inner being. And this is consistent with Elton Wilson (1993) who states that from a person-centred model of counselling, the aim of life is to be fully authentic and responsible and to achieve self-actualisation congruent with individual potential.

⁶ homophobia: denotes negative views towards homosexuality rather than a fear of homosexuals. See page vii for further details

According to Langdridge (2008), this final stage also dismantles the 'them' and 'us' strategy between gays and straights. Thompson (1994) adds that we are more than a label, that any identity is limiting and that it is time for the 'gay' label to go.

Conclusions

Whether a gay man does heterosexually marry or not, each has to work his way through the stages of homosexual identity formation. The literature demonstrates widespread agreement in the coming out process and the obstacles that society has put down that the individual has to navigate. What disrupts this process is societal homophobia and what marks out the heterosexually gay man is his foreclosure, through marriage, in the earlier stages of identity formation. The level of impact this has on him depends on his internalised homophobia that in turn may influence his eventual ability to identify with and integrate into gay society. I am aware that the literature appears to be weighted towards explaining the experiences of those who found their sexual identity a problem, but my literature review also includes studies that reported those who have had an easier journey.

Next Chapter

In Chapter 3, I will describe the methodology for this study, including the research philosophy & design, methods used for data collection and analysis, as well as ethical, reliability, validity and trustworthiness considerations.

Chapter Three

Methodology

"A person's experience cannot be figured out by others, or even by the person experiencing it. It cannot be expressed in common labels. It has to be met, found, felt, attended to, and allowed to show itself"

(Gendlin, 1981, p156)

According to Hart (2005) and Murray (2006), this chapter describes and justifies the methodological assumptions, data collection tools, sampling and techniques of analysis used in the research as well as ethical, reliability, validity and trustworthiness considerations. Buckroyd and Rother (2008) argue that the reader should be able to repeat the study using only the information provided in the paper.

Research Philosophy & Design

I spent the summer of 2010 considering the research element of my degree, and allowing research titles to develop. I was drawn to explore the perceived reality of 'coming out' later in life from a heterosexual marriage, and to gain an understanding of how the participants had constructed their present and future reality as a 'reading' of both personal

and societal past experiences, as described by Etherington (2004) and Willig (2008), but also how their past experiences had influenced later decisions, that is so central to Heidegger's approach to phenomenological study of the lived experience (McConnell-Henry, Chapman & Francis, 2009).

Barker, Pistrang and Elliott (2002) and Willig (2008) argue that the research title determines the research technique. Barker et al. (2002), and Maykut and Morehouse (1994) add that a quantitative method is necessary to answer a question and that a qualitative approach is more suitable in the exploration of life experiences, although Davies (2007b) contends that exploratory research can be either quantitative or qualitative, depending on the research question. Barker et al. (2002) & Coolican (2006) add that it also depends on whether the participants are reporting or are being observed.

Although there have been quantitative studies about 'coming out' by Higgins (2002), Malcolm (2008), Rosario et al. (2011), and Rowen and Malcolm (2003), the subject matter that I wanted to research leaned towards a heart-felt, in-depth recollection of personal perceptions and experiences of coming out that Davies (2007b) refers to. For me, this discounted a quantitative study or the impersonal nature of a literature study.

Wheeler, McLeod and Elliot (2010) advise that qualitative methods of data collection include structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews,

observation, interactive workshop, focus group, questionnaires, and the literature review. However, Willig (2008) argues that qualitative methods of data collection can be reduced to semi-structured interviews, participant observation, diaries and focus groups.

I discounted participant observation because of the retrospective nature of my enquiry, and I discounted diaries because, as Clark (1996) describes, people rarely keep this kind of journal. I also discounted focus groups because I wanted to give space to the *individual* voices of the participants. Semi-structured interviews seemed most appropriate (Barker et al., 2002) as I wanted to give the participants leeway to describe their experience of coming out rather than restrict them to view it from my own vantage point. Furthermore, Willig (2008) described semi-structured interviews as the most widely used method of data collection in qualitative research.

Although I had chosen to conduct semi-structured interviews, I still had to decide how to approach the data. The phenomenological approach appealed to me: to explore the participants' lived experiences and to strike the balance between Husserl's *epoché* and bracketing and Heidegger's opposition to this (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009).

What also appealed was exploring social constructionist's view that multiple perspectives are valid & possible (Barbour, 2008; Barker et al., 2002; Denscombe, 2003; Deurzen-Smith, 1998; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Stainton-Rogers, 2006; Willig, 2008); that the scientific world is not the one that people 'live in' on a daily basis (Rudestam & Newton, 2007);

and that from Rogers' work, "what a person reports 'is' their experience and cannot be invalidated" (Coolican, 2006, p97).

I rejected the 'mechanistic', quantitative nature of content analysis, using word and phrase frequencies to determine the relative importance of themes; thematic coding and labelling, described by Robson (2011). I also rejected the grounded theory where the formulation of themes appeared to be less about real felt-senses of the participants' experiences that Coolican (2006) and Robson (2011) described. Furthermore, I rejected the constant comparative method of data analysis, more useful in developing propositions, as detailed by Maykut and Morehouse (1996), because I wanted to fully engage with the 'feeling' data, and to use my humanness to understand other humans.

I was drawn to the autobiographic nature of the heuristic approach described by Moustakas (1990), where the researcher is not a detached observer, but actively plays a part in the study and how he makes sense of it (Barker et al., 2002). I saw the research as an opportunity for self-discovery about my own experience and life (Moustakas, 1990). My understanding of the six stages of heuristic enquiry (Etherington, 2004; West, 2001), especially the *explication* stage of becoming bodily awakened to the 'felt' meaning of the data, mirrored the somatic body sensations that I had experienced in my own coming out journey (Etherington, 2004). I sat there and bodily 'felt' the heuristic enquiry was right for me.

Alongside the heuristic approach, I wanted to reflect on my own perspective and provide context for the setting in which the data was analysed (Oliver, 2004). As the interviewer, I was core to the interview process and to the process of interpreting the participants' descriptions of their worlds (Davies, 2007b). Reflexivity in the research mirrored, for me, the requirement to be reflexive in counselling practice: questions such as 'what is happening right now?' and 'what is it that he is saying touches me?' occurring to me from both clients and participants alike (Brach, 2003; Etherington, 2004).

Integral to the heuristic and reflexive stance of the researcher are the paradoxical concepts of the phenomenological paradigm: Husserl's *epoché* and bracketing against Heidegger's *indwelling* (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; McConnell-Henry et al., 2009); where *indwelling* is to be acutely attuned to the experiences and meaning of others while at the same time consciously acknowledging that bias *will* exist and having an awareness of the *kind of* bias that is there (Elliott & Williams, 2001; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Moustakas, 1990); and *epoché* is to remove or become aware of one's own prejudices, viewpoints and assumptions in order to see the experience as experienced by the participant (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). McConnell-Henry et al. (2009) described the Heideggerian joint adventure of the research, and Riessman (2002) added that the participant attends and tells their experience to the researcher, who transcribes and analyses the data, and finally you, the reader, who interprets for yourself the words and meanings within the dissertation.

Interview Design & Selection of Participants

Rossi (2010) argues that the semi-structured interview enables participants to narrate remembered autobiographical experiences in their life where they had veered away from society's expectations. Riessman (2002) added that I wasn't actually 'giving voice' to the participants but committing to 'hear voices, record and interpret' what the participants offered. I was mindful of the need to maximise rapport between myself and the participants as discussed by Dallos and Vetere (2005), as well as to maximise the depth of data obtained, through means of clarification, completion and elaboration of answers, detailed by King and Horrocks (2010).

The interview itself defines a limitation on what questions can realistically be covered in an hour. I had considered including questions on: the participant's coming out story (Blais et al., 2004); internalised homophobia (Davies, 1996b; McMichael, 2000); current emotional attachments (Higgins, 2002); reasons for marriage (Higgins, 2002); and experience(s) of counselling. However, I finally decided to adapt the interview questions that Bates (2010) had used (see Appendix 2.6).

Sample

I advertised for participants who were practising counsellors via *Therapy Today* and LGBT counselling services then expanded my search, following agreement from my research tutor, to include the general public via gay organisations and publications. The sample was self-selected (Henrickson

et al., 2008; Higgins, 2002), provided that the inclusion and exclusion criteria were met.

Unlike Rossi (2010), participant recruitment on this sensitive and potentially stigmatising topic was, at first, slow but I had sufficient respondents, excluding a number of late responses received after I had completed the scheduled participant interviews.

See Appendix 1.3 for CASS definition of sexual maturity, Appendix 2.1 for Sampling details, Appendices 2.4 & 2.5 for the pre-interview questionnaire and Information Sheet, and Appendix 2.9 for Selection Criteria details.

Data Collection

Oliver (2004) advises on the importance of making participants feel at ease in interview, and to help me prepare, I was interviewed as a participant in a separate research project. Additionally, I conducted practice interviews, as recommended by McLeod (2003). Four of the interviews were conducted in the participant's workplace, the final interview was conducted via Skype from home. The interviews were planned for one hour, but three overran significantly, with the participants' agreement. This resulted in a heavier workload for data transcription and analysis, but with the possibility of greater reward with more data.

It is generally agreed that transcription is a time-consuming activity in data collection (Dallos & Vetere, 2005; Denscombe, 2003; Spong, 2011),

but I recognised that by undertaking that transcription myself I would familiarise myself with the data (Denscombe, 2003; Mintz, 2010; Spong, 2011; Willig, 2008). McLeod (2003) argues that in qualitative research, data analysis starts while the data is being collected, and it seemed to me that during transcription, I was already beginning to immerse myself in the data, in a way similar to my immersion in my client's world in counselling placement, as described by Natiello (2001).

During transcription, I identified the participants by the colours of the rainbow and changed the names of other individuals. I made a conscious decision not to transcribe verbatim false starts, incomplete sentences and repeated words (Ruben & Ruben, 2005; Willig, 2008). Having completed the interviews and transcriptions one month later than planned (see appendix 2.10) I was left with the daunting task of analysing over 55,000 words. It felt as though it were a rubix cube, an impossible task and with no idea where to start or how to perform it.

Data Analysis

According to Barbour (2008), Maykut and Morehouse (1994) and Mintz (2010), data analysis includes deconstructing the data into units of meaning and then reconstructing it into provisional themes and categories, and refining them over time. I also found myself balancing Heidegger's stance of trying to be as true to the participant's view on the phenomenon, against Husserl's *epoché* and bracketing in order to accurately describe the data and reconstruct participants' perspectives, as

described by Ahmed (2006), Alaggia and Millington (2008), Maykut and Morehouse (1994), McConnell-Henry et al. (2009) and Moustakas (1994).

Moustakas (1990) described the six stages of heuristic research. *Initial engagement* where the exact item under research is reached at through a self-dialogue and I found myself comparing my 'coming out' story with those of the participants, and vicariously feeling the trauma of experiences recounted by Red, Green and Yellow in particular.

My *immersion* when I 'ate, slept and dreamt' the research topic and everything that I touched in life, I saw as a possible insight into the research, from client work, to telling my parents about my new boyfriend and taking part in my first Pride march; I also found that I had to take breaks from the research to provide distance and perspective, and to allow myself to process their stories and mine, which had become intertwined. I realised the synergies and appropriateness of the research approach for me when I read Moustakas (1990), who argues the researcher undertaking an heuristic enquiry in qualitative research is required to take a similar position that a person-centred counsellor needs with his clients in offering them Roger's core conditions.

Incubation when there is a need to create space between the research and day-to-day living, to allow the data to 'soak in' subconsciously, and this metaphor was brought home to me by Segnit (2010) describing how a good meal is about pairing flavours together to present a whole, rather than presenting the dishes separately.

Illumination follows when new insights into the data and changes to previously held understandings begin to emerge into consciousness with different ideas and initial groupings of themes, and I had several false starts at grouping the data, then moving towards trying to sense Bugental's "red thread" of the participants' real concerns, as described by Mearns & Cooper (2005). I discovered the truism that data analysis is not done as a one-off activity, but repeated to refine the researcher's understanding of the data.

Explication takes place when the themes can be explored further by indwelling, self-searching, self-disclosure and Gendlin's (1981) focusing in order to fully examine what has come into the researcher's consciousness, and I spent the following six months revisiting and refining draft themes as my understanding and insight into the material deepened; and I was able to look at the data with more detachment and objectivity thereby accurately describing the participants' data from their perspective.

Finally, *creative synthesis* where research reaches its final form, a reflective blend between participants, self and the literature, with some poetry, posters, and speeches included (Moustakas, 1990; West, 2001). See Appendix 4.2 for more on creative synthesis.

Although the heuristic stages are described linearly, I found myself in different stages with different units of data, some of the data requiring more incubation than other data, other data calling for periods of

indwelling and focusing, building up a deeper-seated, body-sensed insight into the human experience in question incrementally over time (Moustakas, 1990).

See Appendix 2.11 for an audit trail of the data collection and analysis.

Ethical Considerations

I submitted a detailed research Ethics Form to the University of Chester Ethics Board, which was accepted with minor amendments by my research supervisor. Within the Ethics Form, I addressed the issues that the BACP Ethical Framework (Bond, 2004) and the Research Governance Handbook (University of Chester, 2009) stipulate, including detailing that informed consent (King & Horrocks, 2010; Oliver, 2004; University of Chester, 2009) and the participants' right to withdraw consent (Bond, 2004; Denscombe, 2003; Mintz, 2010; University of Chester, 2009) would be included on the information sheet, pre-interview questionnaire and the consent form; the potential for distress to participants, participant inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Appendix 2.9), participant reimbursement of travel expenses, exclusion of dual relationships between myself and participants, anonymity and confidentiality of data (Bond, 2004; Walliman, 2005) and confirmation of supervision arrangements (Mintz, 2010).

King and Horrocks (2010) and Oliver (2004) describe how due care to participants is required. In response, I drew the participants' attention to the sensitive nature of the study in the information sheet and consent

form, which I emailed to participants prior to interview. Maykut and Morehouse (1994), Mintz (2010) and Spong (2011) describe member checks as giving the participants the opportunity to provide feedback, so I gave my participants review access to the interview transcripts. I sent the draft Results chapter to all participants (see Appendix 2.12) for them to review in context with other participants. Again, as part of member checks, I intend to offer a copy of the dissertation to participants once submitted.

I spent time considering whether this research on human sexuality fell into the category of 'moral causes', as described by Hart (2005) and Lee (1993), and might be seen as me espousing the merits of gay affirmative therapy⁷, whether this would be problematic and something that I should avoid. Although I recognise that participants may be from a minority, over-researched population, Barbour (2008) contends that the LGBT community is not a 'vulnerable group'.

Elliot and Williams (2001) state that research is a delicate balance of learning while doing no harm, so I provided sign-posting to gay affirmative therapy on the Information Sheet (see Appendices 2.4 & 2.5) in case participants were re-touched by unresolved issues that arose during interview (Bond, 2004; King & Horrocks, 2010).

I found myself close to tears at a point during the interviews with Red and Yellow and felt thankful that I had anticipated the possibility of being

⁷ Gay affirmative therapy aims to self-actualise gay men by recognising and exploring their core identity. See page vi for further details

touched by what participants might describe in interview by pre-arranging additional supervision with my individual supervisor (Barbour, 2008; Elliot & Williams, 2001; King & Horrocks, 2010; Mintz, 2010).

Reliability, Validity & Trustworthiness

McLeod (2003) argues that qualitative research should be judged on its trustworthiness, rather than its reliability & validity, which were developed for assessing quantitative research. In terms of trustworthiness, I have provided an audit trail of the process and methodology used; provided sufficient context around the study; have been explicit about the aims of the research, how the research was designed and undertaken and explained the reasons behind key decisions made; I have also acknowledged the provisional and open-ended nature of the phenomenological study, and the analysis and interpretation of the data (Denscombe, 2003; McLeod, 2003; Mintz, 2010).

Denscombe (2003) asks the question whether the research can be repeated and would the same results and conclusions be drawn. Bates (2010) researched this phenomenon previously, and I have only slightly amended Bates' interview questions (see Appendix 2.6), so the research can be repeated.

However, Elliot and Williams (2001), Flick (2009), McLeod (2003) and Thompson (1994) remind us of Heidegger's fundamental belief, as described by McConnell-Henry et al. (2009) that the researcher is a central and influential tool in the research process, and that he declares

his own interest but is able to objectively analyse the data, so the research and the conclusions will be different. Denscombe (2003) reminds us that participant inclusion and exclusion criteria may be different; the participants *will* be different; they *will* describe different experiences; the data *will* be different. Although the same results and conclusions cannot be drawn, they should find a fit with existing knowledge and translate to comparable situations.

The participants are the co-researchers and their motivation to take part in the research tends to remain unexamined, but Stowe (1999) reports that in gay men that accept their homosexual identity, there is often a desire to improve conditions for future generations of gay men. Sullivan (1996) adds that gay identity is developed in isolation, that this is especially true for gay men from heterosexual marriages, and that there is a healing experience in sharing personal biographies with others.

Limitations

As Higgins (2002) describes, the research design is retrospective, participants were asked to look back on their life and give answers *now* to decisions that they made in the *past*, and these may not be the same reasons for their decisions made *at the time*. Cornett (2008) advises there could be multiple and varied interpretations for their recollections and actions. King et al. (2003) report participants' accounts of their lives and the discrimination they faced cannot be independently verified. Higgins (2006) advises self-reporting of past events can be unreliable, and Plöderl et al. (2010) add they are possibly more prone to bias if the participant is

distressed. Higgins (2006) states it is useful to remind ourselves that people are not necessarily any better at accurately attributing the causes of their actions at the time of acting than they are afterwards.

See Appendix 4.1 for additional limitations to the study, in terms of the semi-structured nature of the interview; sampling limitations and the literature review being mainly conducted in English.

Next Chapter

In Chapter 4, I will present the results, or outcome, of the study. The chapter gives voice to the participants and allows the reader to witness their story, without undue interpretation.

Chapter Four

Results

*"Why do I prefer boys? Because of their shape and their voices
and their smell and the way they move"*

Christopher Isherwood

(Isherwood, 1977, p17)

Introduction

I interviewed five gay men all of whom had been previously heterosexually married. The interviews were semi-structured which led to the participants being able to place emphasis on certain areas of their coming out story.

Participant Portraits

Red was born in the early 1970s, knew he was gay at eleven, and came out mid 2000s. He appeared to have fully felt the constraints of society's expectations on him. He felt socially alienated from his school friends, he "knew" that how he felt was wrong, yet also knew he could not speak to anyone about it. His teenage years were wracked with guilt and shame. He forced himself into heterosexual relationships. He married, open to his

wife about his sexual doubts, and aware of his unexplored sexual feelings for men.

Orange was born in the early 1950s and came out late 1980s. He reported being unaware of his gay identity until the end of his marriage. He worked in the airline business, where he stated "being gay was as normal as being straight". He had a chance encounter with a straight-acting gay man then he began to identify himself as gay. He has rejected the "tell everyone I'm gay" on the basis of personal choice.

Yellow was born in the early 1960s and came out late 1980s. At eight years old he felt different from other boys. At high school he found that the only way to survive the homophobic bullying was to "be it". He started experimenting sexually in his early teens with girls and boys, and did not label himself, sexually. He reported many instances of homophobia, prejudice and ignorance in the judicial system in battling for access to his son, in the workplace, as well as hate crimes against him and his partner.

Green was born in the early 1960s and came out early 2000s. In childhood he was aware he was different but not sure exactly how. There were no positive images of gay men: his mother told him it was a "cruel trick of nature". He married and had children because "that is what you did". When he came out he felt normal for the first time in 40 years. He does not identify with many aspects of the gay scene.

Blue was born in the late 1940s and separated early 1980s. He experimented sexually with boys and girls from an early age. He developed his own ethics and did not experience any discomfort about his sexuality. He married because he had a deep desire to create a loving, happy family. He brought to the interview a deep understanding of LGBT history, queer theory and poor coverage of LGBT issues in therapy training.

See appendix 3.1 for fuller participant portraits.

Themes & Subthemes

It took me several months to organise what the participants explored in interview into themes and subthemes. I initially tried to fit the data into the themes that Bates (2010) had uncovered in her study, using the Cass stage descriptions (Cass, 1984), and themes that appeared from my initial literature review. This migrated to themes based on how the participants saw the world at different life stages. I finalised the themes and subthemes, detailed in table 1, while drawing the literature, results and discussion chapters of the dissertation together. Appendix 2.11 provides further details of the iterations I went through.

Table 1: Final Themes & Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Identity Formation	Identity Awareness Feeling Different
Coming Out to Self	Homophobia Feeling Alienated

	Fear, Shame and Guilt Pressure to Conform Lasting Impact of Homophobia Denial, Foreclosure and Suicide
Coming Out To Others	To Wife To Children To Friends To Parents and Family To Work Colleagues
Gay Society	Identity With & Integration Into Gay Society Gay Pride & Activism
Integrated Self	

Theme 1: Identity Formation

Gay or straight, black or white, at some point in our lives, we become aware that we are separate from our parents and have our own identity. We then question what this identity is, by using the clues around us. The participants described how they used their knowledge of other cultures, or lack of them, to help work out who they wanted to be:

It was quite a diverse community... there was Asian kids... black kids... I felt "oh, I belong here because I'm different too"
(Yellow 34)

my mum used to say things like "if you misbehave, the darkies will come to get you" (Green 9)

"This gay couple moved in... the house was full... paintings... music... fruit... colour... it was like a fairy-tale... I made a shift to decide to go that way rather than the way of my upbringing"
(Blue 13, aged 4)

For those who do not feel they are the same as others, identity awareness includes an awareness of “difference”. Apart from Orange, the participants described how they “felt different” from an early age:

“they were talking about their girlfriends... they would be describing, for me, how I felt about Jonathan” (Red 7, aged 11)

“knowing I’m different... I don’t identify with girls and I don’t identify with boys, so “What am I?” (Yellow 13)

*“I always knew I was different but I couldn’t think what it was.”
(Green 5)*

“I knew that I was kind of failing to be a boy, properly” (Blue 36)

Theme 2: Coming Out To Self

Coming out to ‘self’ means the journey of coming to terms with what marks you as different from those around you and depends on how you and others behave around that difference. One example of this is homophobic comments and abuse, and the participants describe early experiences of this:

comments that other boys would make... "so and so's a pouf". And all the time I'd be thinking "that's me, they're talking about me". (Red 14)

People started... calling me pouf... queer... and I didn't understand it really (Yellow 23)

I was picked on by one of the teachers... he'd pick me up by the hair and shaking me because I wouldn't, I couldn't, play basketball (Green 37)

I was hideously bullied at school... people saying "you're a little pouf", yeah, kicking the shit out of me for that reason (Blue 35)

Feeling alienated, not part of the group, is part of coming out as 'different', as some of the participants reported:

"How can I tell someone this is what's happening to me?" And I couldn't... because all I was hearing... was "This is wrong. This is bad. This is not normal". (Red 11)

"This had to be something that we kept secret because other people probably wouldn't understand or be like us" (Yellow 19)

I thought it was just me... "well, surely there's somebody else?", and you have this desperate need to feel normal (Green 50)

Fear, shame and guilt about homosexuality is internalised homophobia, where the 'difference' becomes a problem and is rejected. The participants revealed:

there is absolutely no way, ever, this is going to happen... I am not gay, I am straight, and I'm going to be straight, and I am going to be properly straight. (Red 38)

I just felt this complete shame. I just felt this feeling of shame (Yellow 55)

Internalised homophobia can lead to fear of being outed by others. Red described how his brother gave him an ultimatum to come out to his father, Green's sister outed him to his parents and Yellow described how his wife outed him to everyone.

While Orange accepted the explanation of crushes on school friends and Blue never saw his sexuality as an issue, three of the boys learnt that what they were feeling was wrong, from the society around them:

if two gay men came on the television and kissed... I can recall my father saying... "They should be killed. They're animals".

*And I used to sit there and think "that means **I should be killed because I'm an animal**" (Red 29)*

*"my teacher saying "No, girls are allowed to do **this** and boys are allowed to do **that**"... that means "if I'm a boy, I can't be this, I can't have these feelings... I didn't fit in either camp, I was that different" (Yellow 9)*

There was no positive images of being gay... It was like, if you were gay there was something wrong with you, you had an illness or you were a freak of nature. (Green 7)

The participants described how they managed to make sense of their world in the light of the homophobia around them:

my grandparents, aunts and uncles, my parents had this discussion about Billy... because there was something wrong with him (Red 16)

I went completely overboard ... the only way to survive this is "be it" (Yellow 27)

I've had to have my own ethics and my own views... I don't accept rules from elsewhere (Blue 12)

Although Blue married because he wanted to create a family, two of the

participants really found it difficult to accept the notion that they might be different, and this led to denial, foreclose and suicidal ideation

*"I'm not gay. I can't be gay because I've got a girlfriend...
Then, I had the approval from others" (Red 25-26)*

The only way out for me would be to end my life (Red 27)

*The touch of a woman never felt right... but I just thought
that's what you have to do... I thought I didn't have to think
about the gay bit. If I just ignored it, it would go away. And I
think I successfully managed to ignore it for a long time (Green
11)*

*I couldn't live as I was any longer... I used to go to bed wishing
I could die... coming out the closet, I think, saved my life
(Green 50)*

After many years of foreclosure, three of the participants described the emotional turmoil of finally coming out to themselves, which marked the end-point of their marriage

*I'd read a blog by a guy... he'd waited his whole life until he
came out. I thought to myself... "Do I want to continue like this
and be like that man? Can I do that?" And I knew the answer
was no. (Red 58)*

I watched the tele... and these two guys were... just sitting up in bed talking and I was thinking... "that's who I really am, that's what feels right"... "I need to be like these men" (Yellow 47)

for the first time in 40 years... I wasn't sick, and I wasn't diseased, that I wasn't different from anybody else... I was ok... there wasn't anything wrong with me (Green 21)

All of the participants had counselling to make sense of their changing identity. Red's counsellor said:

"It's like watching a child in Ethiopia who is starving to death because their basic need for food isn't being met. That's what it feels like, when I see you, Red, that your basic need is not being met... this is what you are doing to yourself" (Red 55)

Theme 3: Coming Out to Others

As well as coming out to self, the gay man has to come out to other people in his life, and this includes coming out to others in early sexual experimentation:

a huge part of me was kind of saying "don't do this, do not give into this because you will lose everything. You'll lose your family's love" (Red 40)

*"what have I been missing?" ... Of course at fifteen, it was like
"there you go, this is it" (Yellow 36)*

*there was mutual masturbation and kissing ... I remember that
felt right (Green 10)*

*I didn't feel that anything was wrong because it all felt very out
in the open, very honest. I would tell my girlfriend that I was
spending the weekend with my boyfriend (Blue 17)*

For some of the participants, sexual experimentation occurred over the internet and in person, during the marriage:

I think I became addicted to accessing gay porn (Red 51)

*I'd go in the chatrooms... that was when the cupboard in the
back of my mind was unlocked (Green 16)*

*when he was asleep I'd leant over him and held his hand and I
thought... "Oh my god, this is what it feels like"... and yet... "this
isn't what it feels like because this isn't it" (Red 50)*

*I thought... this is the next stage of my life... I'm now going to
be a gay man (Orange 12)*

It was the first time that sex felt right. I remember I gave him a blow job... I'd never done that... but it was like, I knew what to do (Green 17)

Coming out to others tends to be most difficult for those that the individual feels closest to, and for gay men from heterosexual marriages, this means their wife. Two of the participants described their highly emotional state in coming out to their wife

(Yellow's doctor challenged him about the bruises on his body that his wife had given him) That gave me the permission to say to Lori, "I'm leaving" ... I didn't say "I'm leaving you because of my, you'd beaten me up; I'm leaving you because I'm gay" (Yellow 48-49)

(When Green's wife said) "I think you're gay" (and Green admitted it, she said) "it didn't need to matter... you're still the childrens' father and you have a right to be happy"... and for the first time, the first in forty years, I thought I felt normal (Green 20)

Both Red and Yellow reported how their wives suggested an open-relationship to save the marriage, that they could have sex with other men if that is what they needed, but both rejected this, stating that they had never cheated on their wives with other men:

I don't want to have sex with lots of men... I want a person that I can love and that can love me (Red 58)

Yellow described that his wife fought for custody of their son in court, demonstrating the ignorance and prejudicial homophobia prevalent during the 1980s:

I was cross-examined a lot (in court)... "did I want to make my son gay?"... The court also ordered a psychological assessment on me... because I was a gay father (Yellow 63)

All of the participants had children by their marriages. Their children reacted differently, depending on their age. Red, Yellow and Green both described how their children accepted them. Blue described how his children had to deal with society's reaction to their dad being gay:

(Red's youngest daughter asking him if he might have a boyfriend) "I could call him Daddy-2"... It didn't matter to me if nobody else loved me, at all, because my children did (Red 60)

They defended us without telling us... and they probably put up with a whole load of flack that they've never ever told us about (Blue 53)

Yellow was outed by his wife to his friends, and Blue was never "in". Red described how he came out to friends who he thought would accept him

more readily. Orange spoke of individual choice and questioned the need to come out and Green reported mixed reactions from:

"I'll share a room with you on holiday"... (to other friends who would be) "sending texts about you hanging around toilets or whatever" (Green 22)

There was a real mix of reactions to coming out to parents. Red's anticipated rejection by his father did not happen, but he did not expect his parents' need for time to get used to him being gay. Orange has never explicitly told his parents nor sees the need to:

He said, you really believed that I wouldn't want you in my life, that I wouldn't love you?... it was like, "gosh, this isn't how it was supposed to be"... the years that I believed what would have happened... and it didn't happen (Red 62)

I never told any of my family and I never felt the need to (Orange 30)

My mother... just cried and "what will people say?"... my sister... "I knew that anyway"... (my dad) gave me this hug and said "it's alright, it's ok, you are who you are" (Yellow 56-57)

My mum struggled with it... she would curl her lip up at my

*dad, "oh his friend" and she would make scathing comments
(Green 36)*

*I said "well, you know I'm gay, don't you?" and she hadn't
really... I'd just kind of assumed that because... I conducted my
life in the open and not in secret... (brother's reaction) "oh,
don't be so ridiculous, I've known you've been gay since you
were a little boy" (Blue 32-33)*

Yellow was outed by his wife to his boss, and reported problems about being out at work during the 80s, colleagues' fear of AIDS and problems with the work he was given. The remainder had positive experiences:

*being gay was dangerous... it was society at that time. You
know, everyone thought I had AIDS or would get AIDS (Yellow
60)*

Theme 4: Gay Society

The participants described their experience of finding their feet in gay society, from feeling isolated and trying to find out where to go and who to meet reported by Orange, but also working out what 'being gay' means to them, from straight-acting to outrageously camp:

*It's not that easy just to say "oh, I'm gay". You can't because
there's whole sets of constructs that go with being a married
person with kids... gay stereotype of Larry Grayson and camp,*

effeminate men... I really struggle with that link (Green 28)

Diversity means... outrageously camp at one end of the spectrum... down the other end... more like me, who to all intents and purposes aren't gay at all because they act totally straight (Orange 45)

The participants described their reaction to sexual practices in gay society, with Green fearing that he might sound like a "judgmental heterosexual":

there are certain aspects of gay sex that you think, "woah", but you think, well if that's what they want to do... well what business is it of mine anyway? (Orange 49)

we both had sex with other people, and that wasn't open, we didn't talk about it... it was the first time really of being in an 'un-open' relationship (Blue 30)

I've never done gaydar... the availability of sex, like it's a tradeable commodity or like dial-a-pizza, I don't like that at all... I wouldn't want to come and drop my trousers for somebody who had just walked in the door (Green 30)

The participants described how they have found a sense of belonging within the gay community:

I think it's important to be out... to be honest and open about your sexuality (Green 43)

the number of gay guys... that have said "I would never have guessed that you're gay because you are totally straight-acting" and I like that, that suits me very well (Orange 36)

I've kind of integrated both... I would not have it that that we weren't acknowledged as a couple... I'm unwilling to hide (Blue 47)

The participants described what they understood by Gay Pride & Activism and whether they are involved or not:

I've attended Pride ever since I came out... I feel so much more comfortable now with my heterosexual peers because I am openly gay (Red 68)

I don't feel the need to go and walk in a parade... you must accept that, just as much as I must accept the fact that you want to do that (Orange 38)

I became a member of trade union, the lesbian, gay & transgender branch of that... a lot of my time was very much focused on gay rights (Yellow 62)

There's always a man in a frock (in a parade)... reinforcing negativity because some people out there think that's all we do (Green 47)

I was always campaigning for our rights... to equality of status... of opportunities (Blue 47)

The participants described why Gay Pride & Activism is still needed today, because as Yellow reported, society is not as equal as we would like it to be:

What I tend to do now is try to get into a conversation with people if it's appropriate; try and educate them (Red 69)

You don't get straight people having straight prides, or black people having black prides.... why do we have to?... I would like there to be a day when we don't all have to walk down the road (Green 47)

Our windows were smashed... letter bombs... spray paint put all over our front door... windows with "queer" and "gay boy"... there was 30 at one time, the police (said they were going to)... torch our house while we were in it (Yellow 71)

I'm still somewhat anxious in the company of men and especially, exclusively, in the company of men then I do feel

quite afraid (Blue 35)

One of the participants described why Gay Activism is needed today, in the world of counselling and psychotherapy

When I trained as a therapist, I was appalled by the situation that I found, that the homophobia and bigotry that there was in psychotherapy... Psychology's still not in a very good place with regard to sex or sexuality or sex and gender minorities. It's in the dark ages (Blue 47-48)

Theme 5: Integrated Self

At the end of the coming out process, a gay man from a heterosexual marriage will have lost a lot, but he will also have accepted and integrated his sexuality into his true identity, whether this is now public or remains private. Blue reflected on how it seems that more married men are coming out as gay today because they know that they can have a similar life, have children, can adopt, have partners and live openly. The participants reflected on their life choices, whether they had any regrets and how they felt about their life now, as a gay man:

For a very long time after coming out, I wouldn't allow myself to regret the years that I could have come out and I didn't because I'd got my children... No, I don't regret (Red 67)

getting married and having kids was what I really wanted to do

(Orange 11)

where I am now... just feels such a good place to be... Being a gay man, it's hard work, no one would do it as a matter of choice, cos it's too hard (Yellow 75)

I look at my life now and... I'm so happy I came out of the closet because I was born this way. I was born gay... and society had made me feel wrong so I hated it, I had to hide it away and I didn't act on it. I don't regret the fact that I haven't been out since I was in my teens because I wouldn't have had my children (Green 38)

All of my first relationships were illegal, and that isn't true any more, thank god (Blue 50)

Next Chapter

Chapter 5 contains the discussion. The chapter gives me a voice to offer the reader my interpretation of the participants' stories against the literature.

Chapter Five

Discussion

In time you will inevitably arrive at the deep structures of existence or, to use Paul Tillich's term, "ultimate concerns"... The four ultimate concerns that are particularly relevant to counselling practice are "death, isolation, meaning in life and freedom"

Irwin Yalom

(Yalom, 2008, p201)

In the following chapter I will provide an overview of the significant findings of the study (Rudestam & Newton, 2007), and comment on the results (Buckroyd & Rother, 2008; Mintz, 2010), interpreting them and reflecting on how my research results compare with the literature (Hart, 2005; Moustakas, 1990; Murray, 2006; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). I will close with a brief reflection of what the research has meant to me (Moustakas, 1990).

Significant Findings

Suicidal ideation, the isolation that is definitional of homosexual identity formation (Chernin & Johnson, 2003; Sullivan, 1996), the struggle to re-negotiate life's meaning after years of foreclosure (Cass, 1984) and the ultimate experience of freedom in a gay identity are clearly present in the participants' stories and map directly onto the four 'ultimate concerns' relevant to therapy (Yalom, 2008).

Two of the participants reported suicidal ideation. This is not a thing of the past, and there is little evidence that it is getting easier for those individuals who feel the full force of societal influences to come out (Isay, 2009; Ohnstad, 2009; Plöderl et al., 2010).

Those participants who felt the force of societal influences, found them restrictive and long-lasting and they suffered in a multi-dimensional way, in terms of guilt, shame, anxiety, internalised homophobia and this is consistent with the study by Higgins (2002). However, although societal influences were a factor in the fear of the anticipated response of coming out, that fear was not a good predictor of the actual reaction of the person they were coming out to.

Yellow's felt sense of belonging with black and Asian children as all different 'together' surprised me; that he made a quantum leap, identifying others as different, in a different way to himself, but then using that difference concept to break free from his isolation and find meaning in life, to find out who he is.

The one thing these men have in common is that their individual searches and growth into a better understanding of meaning in life and greater freedom were unique. However, there is a universality and permanence across time of that search and growth for all humanity (Brach, 2003; Bradshaw, 1991; Elton Wilson, 1993; Isherwood, 1977; Ramer 2005; Rogers, 2004; Yalom, 2008).

Commentary and Interpretation

The participants in this research described a range of experiences in the formation of their homosexual identity from childhood, through their heterosexual marriage to the present day where they all identify as gay men.

Table 2: Reported ease of 'coming out'

Orange	Blue	Yellow	Green	Red
easier				more difficult

From Orange's ease to Red's angst, they all lie within the range of experiences described within Cass's model of homosexual identity formation (Cass, 1979 & 1984).

From early recollections, four of the participants felt at odds with society around them, which concords with the findings of Adams and Phillips (2009), Ellis (2008), and Sue & Sue (2003), and ties in with the Identity Confusion stage (Cass, 1984). Their experiences of feeling different

differed: Green's inability to understand what this difference was is described by Davies (1996c) and Kort (2006); Yellow and Blue both described their greater sensitivity to aesthetic interests detailed by Isay (2009); Red sensed his attraction to a boy that Kort (2004) and Sullivan (1996) described. They all knew something was wrong, as described by Langdridge (2008), except for Orange, who appeared to bypass any early homosexual identity development, as described by Cass (1979 & 1984).

Furnham & Saito (2009), Giertsen & Anderssen (2007) and Morrison & Bearden (2007) describe how society teaches children how to react to situations and events, to construct their own, unique, understanding of their world, and the description of early interactions with others by three of the participants confirmed this finding. As Mearns & Thorne, (2007) described, they needed the approval of others and some felt that society was imposing upon them Rogerian 'conditions of worth'.

Yellow felt a sense of belonging with black and Asian children in the town where he spent his summer holidays because he and they were all different 'together'; reminiscent for me of the "universality of our lives as children" (Bradshaw, 1991, p268). There is research on double jeopardy, where the person is, for example, both black *and* gay (Lago, 2006; Lewis & Phoenix, 2004; Moodley, 2003) but no research where a person makes a quantum leap, identifying others as different, in a different way to himself, but then using that concept to work out who he is. Contrast this to Green's experience of growing up where there were no racial minorities, and was taught by his mother that being different was

something to fear. Blue was influenced by the positive role-model of a gay couple in the neighbourhood who introduced him to paintings, music, fruit, colour & luxury that was missing from his home.

All of the boys who sensed they were different feared and experienced homophobia from peers or teachers at school in the form of name-calling, bullying, or physical assault, either directly or indirectly. They found themselves outside of society's normative boundaries, in this case the assumption of heterosexuality and the societal expectation on them to grow up straight, get married and have children (Adams & Phillips, 2009; Heath, 2009; Ohnstad, 2009), and their feelings of being different and not fitting in meant that they were subjected to the oppressive experiences of societal sanctions in the guise of homophobia (Cass, 1984; Moodley & Murphy, 2010).

Three of the participants reported feeling alone with their difference and that they could not share their feelings, and this conforms to a large research base (Kort, 2006; McNaught, 1998; Norton, 1997; Rosario et al., 2006; Signorile, 1993; Sue & Sue, 2003; Sullivan, 1996). The sense of guilt and shame amongst the participants about being homosexual ranged from 'none' to 'extreme', and three reported the shame of being 'outed' to family and friends by others. These same boys also reported the greatest pressure to conform to society around them, be that from parents or teachers. Later on, these were the men who married to suppress their sexuality as well as who suffered suicidal ideation. Society's effects were restrictive and long-lasting for the participants who did not develop their

own conditions of worth or external locus of evaluation, as described by McMillan (2004), Mearns & Thorne, (2007) and Rogers (2004).

In terms of sexual experimentation, again, there was a wide variation in reported experiences, which fell within the bounds of the literature. Yellow and Blue conducted their sexual exploration in their teenage years (Erikson, 1998), whereas this happened much later for Red, Orange and Green (Bradshaw, 1991; Chernin & Johnson, 2003; Davies, 1996c; Grov & Bimbi et al., 2006). Red described his potential addiction to porn and Green explored chatrooms during their marriage, as described by Kort (2003a). Green reported experimenting with anonymous sex during his marriage (Cass, 1984; Kort, 2003a), but did not report admonishing himself afterwards (Isay, 2009; Signorile, 1993). Red, and Yellow reported that they did not experiment sexually during their marriage, out of loyalty to their wife, as described by Davies (1996c).

The severity of the spell of societal influence was a good predictor of the ease with which the participants came out to themselves and their wives. From Orange's "no problem" through Blue's loss of a family life and Yellow's "I need to be like them" to Green feeling normal for the first time in forty years, and Red's dawning realisation that he could not live the rest of his life denying his sexuality. Both Yellow and Blue reported on how their children had to deal with their father's sexuality in the outside world. Orange only made a slight reference to his children, but the rest of the participants were unanimous in their love for their children.

The participants' experience of coming out to parents and family, friends, and work colleagues, showed that although societal influences were a factor in the fear of the anticipated response, that fear was not a good predictor of the actual reaction of the person they were coming out to. Reactions ranged from "I knew that already" and "did you think I wouldn't love you?" through to questions like "what will people say?" and homophobic comments about gays hanging around in toilets. Yellow reported that his workload was allocated differently as a result of the disclosure. Orange was the only participant who had not come out to his family.

Some of the participants described how they found it hard to come from married life and adjust to living in gay society, from finding what's going on, dissociation from gay stereotypes like camp, effeminate men, or men in drag, the easy availability of internet and casual sex, and open relationships. Two of the participants rejected gay pride activities because of their belief that gay pride events "should not be necessary".

The participants selected their level of homosexual identity (see appendices 2.4 & 2.5) prior to interview. Orange self-reported at level 4, identity acceptance, the remainder at level 6, identity synthesis. Orange's deliberate non-disclosure to family places him at level 4, but the level of Green's dissociation from some aspects of gay society does make me question his placement at level 6. Is Cass's model robust? I don't know, "Labels are for clothing, not for people" as Martina Navratilova reputedly said (Anonymous, 1998).

Final Reflections

Over sixty years ago, Rogers (1951, p485) reported “we live by a perceptual ‘map’ which is never reality itself” and this appears to hold true today. In much the same way as Carroll (2005, p39) reports that

“five people looking at a cow can see five different realities: one a steak, one a painting, one a price, one a family pet and another a case of foot and mouth disease”,

my five participants have made sense, of their identity, their world, in different ways (Moodley & Murphy, 2010), and that they did so in isolation. Yet, I have a real felt-sense that those different paths are part of Roger’s actualising tendency and all lead to a universal destination, to a better understanding of the meaning in life (Brach, 2003; Bradshaw, 1991; Rogers, 2004; Yalom, 2008). It was only while putting the draft together, in the creative synthesis stage of the heuristic research, that I uncovered this universal truth, as Moustakas (1990) almost predicted I would.

My personal hope is that this research touches a single counsellor in a way that they can relate to a single gay client, who, for a single moment feels that culturally empathic connection. Then, my agony and pain undertaking this research will have been worthwhile.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The deep individual loneliness, which is a part of so many lives, cannot be ameliorated unless the individual takes the risk of being more of his real self to others.

Carl Rogers

(Rogers, 1970, p116)

Rogers (2004) reports that the journey of self-discovery, or actualisation, is one that every individual takes. While it is true that some travel further than others, it is also apparent that those with a minority identity have longer journeys to undertake. This research has explored the journey of self-discovery in a small number of gay men from heterosexual marriages, focussing on the formation of their homosexual identity.

As a qualitative study of the phenomenological experiences of the researcher and the participants, there has been no postulation, and proof or rebuff of specific theories. Rather, it has demonstrated that each participant uniquely perceived and interpreted the world that they grew up

in and became acculturated to, and that each perception and interpretation is valid and real. I was surprised how one of the participants used his sense of 'difference' with black and Asian children, to break free from his isolation and be comfortable with his and their difference from the majority population. Ultimately, the participants have made sense, of their identity, their world, in different ways and that they did so in isolation.

Some of the participants described their suicidal ideation, their sense of isolation, their shame at being gay and their fear of coming out. Their experiences are not a thing of the past but remain a problem for those who internalise their homophobia, and are in tune with homosexual identity formation theory and the current literature.

My aims in the research were two-fold: to 'join in the conversation' of counselling research and to bring a subject close to my heart to that conversation so that practising counsellors can be reminded of the uniqueness of the identities that their clients possess.

Implications of the study for practice and training

From this study, the professional counsellor should gain a better understanding of the complexities surrounding minority identity formation in general, in homosexual identity formation in more detail, and to gain insight that there is a range of experiences of homosexual identity formation in gay men from heterosexual marriages. They should be more equipped to demonstrate 'cultural empathy' that Moodley and Murphy

(2010) describe as an accurate understanding of the experiences of clients from other cultures.

The professional counsellor needs to be aware that it is unethical to not respect their clients' culture and lifestyle (Davies, 1996a; Home Office, 2011), and this includes ignorance (Balick, 2010; Blais et al., 2004; Mepham, 2008; Isay, 2009) and the belief that offering Roger's core conditions are sufficient in themselves (Davies, 1996a). They also need to be aware that 'curative therapy' is no longer a valid option (Balick, 2010; Daniel, 2009; Davies & Neal, 1996; Independent, 2009; Maccio, 2010; Mepham, 2008).

Counselling courses in the UK have been criticised as failing to provide sufficient coursework or practical experience specific to working with queer clients (Davies, 2007a; Drummond, 2008; Emert & Milburn, 1997; Grove, 2007; King et al, 2003; Perlman, 2003; Taylor, 2007), and that these training courses are heterocentric⁸ and homophobic (Drummond, 2008; Taylor, 2007). Although it is true that there will always be gaps in a counsellor's knowledge and experience, Balick (2010), Davies (2007a), Emert and Milburn (1997), Horowitz and Newcomb (2002), and Moodley and Murphy (2010) all advise this should not be seen as an excuse by training providers, who need to include material on minority identity formation, including homosexual identity on their courses. Training providers could look to Moukam (2012) as an example, who offers cultural competency training to counsellors.

⁸ Heterocentrism assumes that heterosexual lifestyles are the normal standard. See page vi for further details

Implications of the study on myself

Research is a journey of personal development. Through indwelling and reflection of the participants' stories, I have made progress on my own life journey: their coming out stories have helped me find the courage to further my coming out both to myself and to others in a profound way and I have a more heart-felt compassionate relationship with myself as a result. I explore my personal growth in more detail in the Epilogue.

Research is also a journey of professional development. I find myself becoming a more skilled counsellor, transferring from the research arena into the counselling room my learning about the dance of Husserl's *epoché* and bracketing with Heidegger's attempts to read between the lines, as described by McConnell-Henry et al. (2009). I also find myself drawn to the idea of further research in the future.

Further Research

A number of related research topics emerged as I read the literature, such as researching the diversity that exists within the LGBT community in terms of age, gender, and race/ethnicity, as reported by Grov and Bimbi et al. (2006), researching into the wife's experience of having been married to a gay man, as alluded to by Kort (2006), or researching on suicidal ideation and attempts by the heterosexually married gay man, to compare with the study on homosexual teenage suicidal ideation by Plöderl et al. (2010).

While Higgins' (2002) research included coming out to children, and Goldberg (2010) refers to studies on children who are being raised by same-sex parents rather than in a mixed orientation marriage, there is little academic literature on the subject of coming out to your own children and certainly not from the child's perspective. This is the research that is calling me most strongly at this moment in time: an exploration centred on the children of a gay man who has been heterosexually married and what their experience has been of their father coming out and the impact that has had on them and their lives.

Epilogue

"Tell me why you are here."

"Tell me, from your heart, why you are here."

'Diving In' workshop, Totnes, 17th February 2012

During the final stages of the dissertation I attended a workshop that aimed to explore how we 'embody, express and live as we are in each present moment', and the first exercise was to explore the two statements above. What followed for me was a fast-paced re-encounter with my coming-out journey, my experiences as a counselling student and the literature and discussions around this dissertation. The participants on the workshop, including myself, were exploring how they were making sense of their world today as a result of their past experiences.

It struck me that their sense of identity was evolving, in much the same way as I had been describing the identity development of gay men from heterosexual marriages. I recollect that during the interview stage of the research, I had a real sense that gay men start the race of life so far behind the white, heterosexual privileged in society, yet here *they* were, in a workshop trying to do the same thing and make sense of the world in which they found themselves. And, here I was, taking part in, and witnessing in others, the universal process of Roger's actualising tendency and 'Becoming a Person'.

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Appendices

Appendix 1.1 Search Strategy

Following on from what I discussed in the introduction of the Literature Review chapter, I had a poor experience on searching on key words (Brettles, 2008).

I developed a search strategy during a university training session (see Search Strategy table below). I used the search strategy on the PsycINFO, PubMed and SocINDEX databases (Brettles, 2008; Mintz, 2010). This threw up a number of articles, some relevant, but most not, because of the seemingly varied ways of describing the social situation under research. However, the articles found were from a number of journals that I thought warranted a more detailed search. Therefore, I performed a full search of every edition for the past five years on the following journals: *Journal of Homosexuality*; *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*; *Gender & Society*; *Journal of Sex Research*; *Therapy Today*; *Clinical Social Work*; *Journal of Family Studies*; *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*; and *Developmental Psychology*. From my search of the University of Chester dissertation repository, I found several that would prove useful to me as a check and balance to the style, content and approach to formatting my dissertation (Ashton, 2006; Collins, 2008; Humphreys, 2006; Knight, 2008). I searched the University of Chester library catalogue from Dewey-Decimals, such as 306.76*: Queer Culture; 616.8583: Therapy of LGBT clients; and 820.9353: Queer History. I included into the search, my

personal reading from authors (Isay, 2009; Isherwood, 1977; Kort, 2003a, 2006, 2008; Ramer, 2005; Signorile, 1995; Sullivan, 1996).

I kept records of the literature searched (Hart, 1998; Ridley, 2008; Wheeler et al., 2010), casting the net wide initially and then performed a second literature review, sorting and sifting the articles into the themes and subthemes uncovered from the interviews.

Search Strategy

1. Proposed Research Title:

An exploration of homosexual identity formation in the heterosexually married gay man

2. Write down the main keywords listed in your title:

homosexual identity formation heterosexual* married gay m?n

3. Think of alternative and associated terms for each word which authors may have used to describe the topic:

identity formation: identity development, sexual identity
heterosexually married gay man: married gay men, married homosexual

4. Look at the keywords you have written down in question 3. Can you identify words where you may be able to use wildcards or truncation?

Ident* formation development sexual h?sexual* married gay m?n

5. Using your keywords from question 3 (or question 4, if you identified wildcards and truncation), create a search string using the Boolean operators of AND, OR and NOT and brackets where appropriate

(h?sexual OR identity OR formation OR develop* OR sexual)

AND

(h?sexual* OR married OR gay OR m?n)

Appendix 1.2 CASS Model of Gay & Lesbian Identity Formation

adapted from Cass (1979) and Kort (2003b)

COMING OUT is a life – long process of exploring one's sexual orientation and Gay / Lesbian identity and sharing it with family, friends, co-workers and the world. COMING OUT is one of the most significant developmental processes in the lives of Gay and Lesbian people. Coming Out is short for the phrase "coming out of the closet." Coming Out means recognizing, accepting, expressing and sharing one's sexual orientation with oneself and others.

- 1 IDENTITY CONFUSION: Personalization of information regarding sexuality.
 - Recognizes thought / behaviors as homosexual, usually finds this unacceptable
 - Redefines meaning of behaviors
 - Seeks information on homosexuality
- 2 IDENTITY COMPARISON: Accepts possibility s/he might be homosexual.
 - Feels positive about being different, exhibits this in ways beyond orientation
 - Accepts behavior as homosexual, rejects homosexual identity
 - Accepts identity but inhibits behavior (ex: heterosexual marriage / anonymous sex)
- 3 IDENTITY TOLERANCE: Accepts probability of being homosexual, recognizes sexual / social / emotional needs of being homosexual.
 - Seeks out meeting other Gay / Lesbian people through groups, bars, etc.
 - Personal experience builds sense of community; positively and negatively
- 4 IDENTITY ACCEPTANCE: Accepts (vs. tolerates) homosexual self – image and has increased contact with Gay / Lesbian subculture and less with heterosexuals.
 - Increased anger toward anti-gay society
 - Greater self – acceptance
- 5 IDENTITY PRIDE: Immersed in Gay / Lesbian subculture, less interaction with heterosexuals. Views world divided as "gay" or "not gay".
 - Confrontation with heterosexual establishment
 - Disclosure to family, co – workers
- 6 IDENTITY SYNTHESIS: Gay / Lesbian identity integrated with other aspects.
 - Recognizes supportive heterosexual others
 - Sexual identity still important but not primary factor in relationships with others

Appendix 1.3 CASS Model: Stage Descriptions

Ideal Stage Descriptions from the Stage Allocation Measure

Pre-Stage 1	<i>You believe you are a heterosexual and never question this. You rarely, if ever, wonder "Am I heterosexual?" You do not believe that homosexuality has anything to do with you personally.</i>
Stage 1	You are not sure who you are. You are confused about what sort of person you are and where your life is going. You ask yourself the questions "Who am I?," "Am I really a heterosexual?" You sometimes feel, think, or act in a homosexual way, but would rarely, if ever, tell anyone about this. You're fairly sure that homosexuality has something to do with you personally.
Stage 2	You feel that you probably are a homosexual, although you're not definitely sure. You realise that this makes you different from other people and you feel distant or cut off from them. You may like being different or you may dislike it and feel very alone. You feel you would like to talk to someone about "feeling different." You are beginning to think that it might help to meet other homosexuals but you're not sure whether you really want to or not. You don't want to tell anyone about the fact that you might be a homosexual, and prefer to put on a front of being completely heterosexual.
Stage 3	You feel sure you're a homosexual and you put up with, or tolerate this. You see yourself as a homosexual for now but are not sure about how you will be in the future. You are not happy about other people knowing about your homosexuality and usually take care to put across a heterosexual image. You worry about other people's reactions to you. You sometimes mix socially with homosexuals, or would like to do this. You feel a need to meet others like yourself.
Stage 4	You are quite sure you are a homosexual and you accept this fairly happily. You are prepared to tell a few people about being a homosexual (such as friends, family members, etc.) but you carefully select whom you will tell. You feel that other people can be influential in making trouble for homosexuals and so you try to adopt an attitude of getting on with your life like anyone else, and fitting in where you live and work. You can't see any point in confronting people with your homosexuality if it's going to embarrass all concerned. A lot of the time you mix socially with homosexuals.
Stage 5	You feel proud to be a homosexual and enjoy living as one. You like reading books and magazines about homosexuals, particularly if they portray them in a good light. You are prepared to tell many people about being a homosexual and make no attempt to hide this fact. You prefer not to mix socially with heterosexuals because they usually hold anti-heterosexual attitudes. You get angry at the way heterosexuals talk about and treat homosexuals and often openly stand up for homosexuals. You are happy to wear badges that bear slogans such as "How dare you presume I'm heterosexual!" You believe it is more important to listen to the opinion of homosexuals than heterosexuals.
Stage 6	You are prepared to tell anyone that you are a homosexual. You are happy about the way you are but feel that being a homosexual is not the most important part of you. You mix socially with fairly equal numbers of homosexuals and heterosexuals and with all of these people you are open about your homosexuality. You still get angry at the way homosexuals are treated, but not as much as you once did. You believe there are many heterosexuals who happily accept homosexuals and whose opinions are worth listening to. There are some things about a heterosexual way of life that seem worthwhile.

(Cass, 1984, p156)

Appendix 1.4 Further Inspirational References

The word count for the dissertation meant that I did not have space to include quotations from authors that I found deeply meaningful to my own coming out journey and that of some of my participants, including the speeches given by Lady Gaga and President Obama. I include these here

"This is what freedom is. This is how I ought always to have lived" (Isherwood, 1977, p24)

Most gay people have been enormously, if not consciously, traumatized by the social pressure they felt to identify and behave as a heterosexual ... Imagine how today's society would respond if 13-19-year-olds were forced to date someone of the same sex. What would the reaction be if they were expected to hold the hand of, slow dance with, hug, kiss and say "I love you" to someone to whom they were not and could not be sexually attracted (McNaught, 1998, p48)

As a child, I knew intellectually that my parents loved me, but I didn't trust in my heart that they would really love me if they knew I was gay. So I began to second-guess what they wanted from me. I did the same with my teachers, my classmates, and my friends. This dependence on the impossible approval of others eventually led to my suicide attempt.... My secret attraction to men was demanding to be expressed, but I believed the truth about me, if known, would make me unlovable – that I would lose approval. I didn't know how to both be myself and please other people (McNaught, 1998, p12)

The only unnatural sex act is that which you cannot perform. Alfred Kinsey (Anonymous, 1988)

It can be frightening to grow up gay or lesbian with a "secret you don't understand, and are afraid to share with anyone for fear that they won't love or respect you anymore." "That holds true for many of the gay and lesbian people who work among you" ... "They grew up in homes in which they were afraid, they went to schools in which they were afraid, and now they report daily to this factory in which they are afraid to share with you their true identity." (McNaught, 1998, p82)

Gay men from heterosexual marriages "are likely to experience difficulties in acculturating to the gay world due to (a) their late arrival on the 'scene' (conflicting with the emphasis in some gay communities on youth and beauty); (b) needing to learn new social skills; (c) needing to reconcile past fantasies with reality; and (d) integrating 'gay' and 'father' roles". (Higgins, 2006, p226)

The inner child carries wounds that can fester and invite disease. You cannot heal the body of the man who doesn't feel love without healing the boy in you too, who grew up hating himself for being different. Who hated himself for his capacity to love, and turned away that part of himself. Go back in time. Find the places, the different ages, when the boy you were was wounded. Go back. Find that boy. Face him. Hold him. Take him in your lap and hug him and tell him that everything will be all right. Only one thing wounds really – not being loved as we are. So go back and love yourself as you were, as no one loved you then. Hold your boy self and rock him and heal him. Tell him that this pain he feels will end, that he will grow and change and stop being a victim of other people's fear and unlovingness. For the wounds that are healed in the body of the boy will generate greater healing in the man that boy has become. And when he has learned to love this part of himself, he can be loved as he is, he can love others. (Ramer, 2005, pp. 64-65)

To be gay is something that begins within ourselves. It begins in our hearts. (Ramer, 2005, p111)

In today's world, one must increasingly learn to live on the edge of doubt. And, above all, we gay people – the people of the paradox – know how to live in doubt. Harry Hay (Thompson, 1994, p8)

"On the night of June 27, 1969, in the heart of my home, Manhattan's West Village, the gay rights movement was born. We stood together on that night the same as we are standing here today in solidarity for change. But today, we stand with peaceful flags, hope for togetherness. And though simple as it may sound, I repeat myself: Shall we move forward in the honor and defense of love? ... We stand together to demand and to defend basic human rights, full equality an end to intolerance and discrimination. We have come so far from the days of Stonewall, but despite the political advances made in terms of our rights and visibility as LGBT people, sadly the truth and the fact is that homophobia and anti gay violence and bullying are alive and real".

Lady Gaga, at Europride 2011, Circo Massimo, Rome, Saturday June 11th 2011 (Diverso Toscana, 2011)

"For nearly 30 years, you've advocated on behalf of those

without a voice. That's not easy. For despite the real gains that we've made, there's still laws to change and there's still hearts to open. There are still fellow citizens, perhaps neighbors, even loved ones -- good and decent people -- who hold fast to outworn arguments and old attitudes; who fail to see your families like their families; who would deny you the rights most Americans take for granted. And that's painful and it's heartbreaking. That's the story of the movement for fairness and equality, and not just for those who are gay, but for all those in our history who've been denied the rights and responsibilities of citizenship -- for all who've been told that the full blessings and opportunities of this country were closed to them. ... For while some may wish to define you solely by your sexual orientation or gender identity alone, you know -- and I know -- that none of us wants to be defined by just one part of what makes us whole. ... My expectation is that when you look back on these years, you will see a time in which we put a stop to discrimination against gays and lesbians ... You will see a time in which we as a nation finally recognize relationships between two men or two women as just as real and admirable as relationships between a man and a woman. ... Tonight, somewhere in America, a young person, let's say a young man, will struggle to fall to sleep, wrestling alone with a secret he's held as long as he can remember. Soon, perhaps, he will decide it's time to let that secret out. What happens next depends on him, his family, as well as his friends and his teachers and his community. But it also depends on us -- on the kind of society we engender, the kind of future we build".

President Obama, at The Human Rights Campaign's 13th Annual National Dinner (The Huffington Post, 2010)

Appendix 1.5 "Over-researched" Literature

Just as a novelist can over-research their background, so too for me with my literature review. I found myself over-researching when exploring identity formation viz-a-viz the essentialist vs social constructionist debate, and then found that the word limit on the dissertation meant I needed to discard it:

Homosexual identity formation can be seen from an essentialist (Furnham & Saito, 2009; Horowitz & Newcomb, 2002; Shokeid, 2002; Thompson, 1994; Wieringa, 1989) or a social constructionist (Cornett, 2008; Glover et al, 2009; Gormley & Lopez, 2010; Hill, 2009; Horowitz & Newcomb, 2002; Wittig, 1989) point of view, but this falls outside the scope of this research.

In coming out, the heterosexually married gay man "who has for a long time felt helpless, silenced, hemmed in by the demands and agendas of others may be making his first act of assertion in years" (Polden, 2002, p156). He may experience regret at not coming out earlier, but Yalom (1998, p265) explains "If we stare too hard at the past it is easy to be overcome with regret". "Though they regret the years they lost by not having been out ... still they are glad and proud to be fathers" (Kort, 2006, p312). McNaught (1998, p177) finds that being born gay had required him to make an "important journey of personal growth". As Holloway (2009, pp. 30-34) explains, "it is about honouring the adolescent who did his best." Mearns (1993, p37) describes this as

evidence of self-acceptance; "Maybe I'm not so bad after all" or "I guess I did the best I could".

Appendix 2.1 Sampling

Initially, I advertised for participants from the counselling world in the north-west via *Therapy Today* and LGBT counselling services, and then to the general public via gay organisations and publications. The full list of organisations I approached are: *Therapy Today*, BACP website, Lesbian & Gay Foundation, Queer Notions, Armistead Project, George House Trust, GLYSS, Sahir House, Terrence Higgins Trust on the Wirral and in the Midlands, Body Positive in Crewe & Manchester, and Cheshire Cheese.

I planned to achieve variation of participants via pre-interview questionnaire with respect to variation in societal pressures, timing of discovery of homosexual orientation, and growing up pre- & post-homosexual legalisation. I sent out to respondents to the advert an information sheet, a pre-interview questionnaire, including definitions of terms (see appendices 2.4 & 2.5 below).

Although I had intended to conduct the interview either on University of Chester or the Lesbian & Gay Foundation premises, or at a location familiar with the participant (for example, their place of work), the interviews took place either at their place of work for four of the participants, and one interview took place from home using Skype. The accessibility question in the information sheet to help identify and address access requirements that a participant may have, then proved redundant.

Appendix 2.2 Research Advertisements

Long advertisement for publications like e-letters for LGBT counselling services in the North-West, Cheshire Cheese, outnorthwest etc

Research into 'Coming Out'

My name is Trevor and I am a student at the University of Chester in my third year of an MA in Clinical Counselling.

I am looking for male counsellors and therapists who now identify as gay and who were once heterosexually married to talk with them in a taped interview about their 'coming out' experience. Participants in the research will remain anonymous and the information collected will not be traceable to any individual. However, I will be using some quotes of the interviews in my final dissertation.

If you are interested in taking part in an interview and want more information then please contact Trevor Newton at nnnnnnn@chester.ac.uk

Shorter advertisement for publications like Therapy Today, Person Centred Quarterly, LGF Weekly Bulletin etc

Research into 'Coming Out' Masters research student at University of Chester is looking for male therapists who now identify as gay and who were once heterosexually married to participate in an interview to describe their 'coming out' experience. If you are interested in taking part and want more information then please contact Trevor Newton at nnnnnnn@chester.ac.uk

Mid-length advertisement

Research into 'Coming Out'

As part of my research project for an MA in Clinical Counselling at the University of Chester, I am looking for male counsellors who now identify as gay and who were once heterosexually married to interview them about their 'coming out' experience. Participants in the research will remain anonymous and the information collected will not be traceable to any individual. However, I will be using some quotes of the interviews in my final dissertation.

If you are interested in taking part in an interview and want more information then please contact Trevor Newton at nnnnnnn@chester.ac.uk

Appendix 2.3 Cover email to Respondents

Hello <respondent>

Thank you for getting back to me. As part of my MA in Clinical Counselling Dissertation at the University of Chester, I am undertaking a research study exploring homosexual identity formation in gay men from heterosexual marriages.

Please find enclosed an Information Sheet that explains the research in more detail that I hope will answer the majority of your questions about the research. Please also find enclosed a Pre-Interview Questionnaire that I will use to confirm that you meet the relevant criteria for the purposes of this study. We can then arrange for an interview, with myself, exploring your coming out story in relation to your heterosexual marriage. The interview will last for approximately one hour and will be audio taped.

If you do decide to take part then the next step is to complete the attached Pre-Interview Questionnaire and return this to me by email (we can get signatures on paper at the interview itself). Please note that you remain free to withdraw from the study at any time.

I will contact you in the near future to see if you still wish to take part and to see if you have any questions that need answering.

Thank you for taking the time to consider taking part in this research study.

Trevor Newton

nnnnnnn@chester.ac.uk

enclosures:

Information Sheet

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

**Appendix 2.4 Information Sheet and Pre-Interview
Questionnaire for Counsellors**

***An Exploration of homosexual identity formation
in gay men from heterosexual marriages***

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are being invited to take part in an interview related to a research project exploring your coming out experience as a gay man who has been heterosexually married. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with the researcher. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is this Project about?

The focus of this project will be on the coming out experiences of gay men from heterosexual marriages. This is in order to explore their reasons for marriage, whether this was due to societal, legislative or other pressures, and the impact those have had on their lives in making that decision.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in an interview. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What should I expect if I take part?

If you decide to take part in this interview then you will be requested to complete a pre-interview questionnaire (enclosed with this Information Sheet) to confirm your eligibility to take part in the research. If selected for interview, I will contact you to agree a suitable date/time and venue for the interview. I will conduct the interview which is expected to last no more than 60 minutes. The interview will be audio-taped and you will receive a transcript of the interview.

You will be asked the following interview questions about your coming out experience, and I may refer to the responses you gave in the pre-interview questionnaire:

1. Can you give me an overview about your life that covers significant events, transition points and critical issues? Say anything you'd like about this.
2. Describe your development as a sexual person.
3. When were you first aware of your same-sex feelings or the sense that your sexual identity might be different from heterosexuals?
4. Was there a moment when you knew something in your life had to change?

5. What was your experience of coming-out to yourself? What made it difficult? What made it easier?
6. What has been your experience coming-out to others?
7. What have been the major barriers to you accepting yourself as gay?
8. Describe your relationship with the heterosexual and gay communities. How has your relationship in the heterosexual community been impacted by your coming out as gay?

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. The information you give during the course of this research is confidential. No names will appear in the transcript and research paper to protect your identity. All information collected from you will be kept under lock and key. Data storage and use will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You may not benefit directly from this study. However, we hope that what we can find out from this research will help us to improve counsellor's understanding of gay men from heterosexual marriages. And you can help us do this.

Will I be paid for taking part in the research?

No, but I will offer to reimburse actual travel expenses to a maximum of £10.

I'd like to take part in the research but my personal circumstances might prevent me from doing so. How do I check this out?

If you have specific access requirements then we can take those into account when we start to make arrangements for the interview. The interview will be conducted in English, but if English is not your first language then we can agree to extend the interview to take this into account. If there are any other concerns then I am happy to address them. To ensure equal participation, I will not ask if you have any personal requirements to be taken into account until after I have checked your eligibility and selected participants via the life experience questions in the pre-interview questionnaire.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

By completing the pre-interview questionnaire and/or talking in interview about your coming out experience, you may touch on memories that are painful for you. If you are impacted by what is explored then you may need to take this to your personal counsellor or to gay affirmative practices such as that provided by the Armistead Project, Body Positive and the Lesbian & Gay Foundation. In the end, only you can decide if you wish to take part.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results from this study may be reported in scientific papers, to be submitted to appropriate conferences or journals. In all publications the results will be written in such a way that your identity is protected.

Who is conducting the research?

Trevor Newton, as part of his MA in Clinical Counselling at the University of Chester.

How is the research being supervised?

The research has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Studies and Counselling at the University of Chester. The research is supervised by

<supervisor's name>
Department of Social Studies and Counselling
University of Chester
Parkgate Road
Chester CH1 4BJ
nnnnnnn@chester.ac.uk

Who do I contact for further information?

Trevor Newton
nnnnnnn@chester.ac.uk

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE – Please complete and return if you are interested in participating in the research

Part 1: Respondent Contact Details	
Name	
Telephone number(s)	
Email	
Preferred method of contact	

Part 2: Respondent Eligibility

Note: The questions in part 2 of the pre-interview questionnaire are here to ensure that you meet the eligibility criteria for the research, which are:

- You are aged 18 or over
- You are male
- You have been married to a female at least once for at least 2 years
- You have **not** been in a heterosexual relationship for at least 2 years
- You identify your current sexual orientation as gay for at least 2 years
- You self-identify at homosexual identity maturity stage 4 or above
- You are in practice as a counsellor/therapist
- You have access to supervision and personal counselling
- You do **not** know the researcher, Trevor Newton

Age	
Year of Birth	
Sex	
Heterosexual Marital History (For the purposes of this research, marriage includes religious or civil-registered marriages and common-law cohabitation between man and woman)	<i>Please give details of the date & duration of your marriage(s)</i> <i>Please state how many years ago it has been since you left your last heterosexual relationship</i>

Current Sexual Orientation	<i>Straight / Gay / Bisexual</i> <i>For how many years have you identified yourself in this current orientation?</i>	
Homosexual Identity Maturity (See last page for definition of stages)	<i>Please state which stage you identify at for the majority of the time</i>	
Do you currently practice as a counsellor / therapist?	Yes / No	
Do you have access to regular supervision?	Yes / No	
Do you have access to personal counselling?	Yes / No	
Do you know the researcher, Trevor Newton?	Yes / No	

Part 3: Respondent Life Experiences

Note: The questions in part 3 of the pre-interview questionnaire are here in case there are more respondents to the research than anticipated and the researcher needs to select which respondents to interview. If this is the case, then the researcher will select respondents based on the answers given in this section, as well as which homosexual identity stage respondents identify at in part 2, to ensure participants from different life-experiences are represented at interview.

a. Thinking back to your childhood (ages 0-18), were you aware if homosexuality was legal or illegal in the country that you grew up in? (If you spent time in different countries, then answer for each country and give ages. If the legal status changed during your childhood, then state how old you were at that time.)

<p>b. When were you first aware of your homosexual feelings? Was this during childhood or before/during/after your heterosexual marriage(s)?</p>
<p>c. How many times have you been heterosexually married? (For the purposes of this research, marriage includes religious or civil-registered marriages and common-law cohabitation between man and woman)</p>

<p>Part 4: Respondent's Declaration</p> <p>The information in this pre-interview questionnaire is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate and I take full responsibility for it.</p> <p>I have read the covering letter attached to this questionnaire and the Information Sheet.</p> <p>I give permission for the anonymised information in parts 2 and 3 of this questionnaire to be referred to in interview and used in the research. This permission is given even if I am not selected for interview.</p> <p>Nevertheless, I am aware that I can withdraw my consent, as detailed in the Information Sheet.</p>	
<p>Name</p>	
<p>Initialed/Signed</p>	
<p>Date</p>	

Homosexual Identity Maturity Stage Descriptions

Pre-Stage 1	<i>You believe you are a heterosexual and never question this. You rarely, if ever, wonder "Am I heterosexual?" You do not believe that homosexuality has anything to do with you personally.</i>
Stage 1	You are not sure who you are. You are confused about what sort of person you are and where your life is going. You ask yourself the questions "Who am I?," "Am I really a heterosexual?" You sometimes feel, think, or act in a homosexual way, but would rarely, if ever, tell anyone about this. You're fairly sure that homosexuality has something to do with you personally.
Stage 2	You feel that you probably are a homosexual, although you're not definitely sure. You realise that this makes you different from other people and you feel distant or cut off from them. You may like being different or you may dislike it and feel very alone. You feel you would like to talk to someone about "feeling different." You are beginning to think that it might help to meet other homosexuals but you're not sure whether you really want to or not. You don't want to tell anyone about the fact that you might be a homosexual, and prefer to put on a front of being completely heterosexual.
Stage 3	You feel sure you're a homosexual and you put up with, or tolerate this. You see yourself as a homosexual for now but are not sure about how you will be in the future. You are not happy about other people knowing about your homosexuality and usually take care to put across a heterosexual image. You worry about other people's reactions to you. You sometimes mix socially with homosexuals, or would like to do this. You feel a need to meet others like yourself.
Stage 4	You are quite sure you are a homosexual and you accept this fairly happily. You are prepared to tell a few people about being a homosexual (such as friends, family members, etc.) but you carefully select whom you will tell. You feel that other people can be influential in making trouble for homosexuals and so you try to adopt an attitude of getting on with your life like anyone else, and fitting in where you live and work. You can't see any point in confronting people with your homosexuality if it's going to embarrass all concerned. A lot of the time you mix socially with homosexuals.
Stage 5	You feel proud to be a homosexual and enjoy living as one. You like reading books and magazines about homosexuals, particularly if they portray them in a good light. You are prepared to tell many people about being a homosexual and make no attempt to hide this fact. You prefer not to mix socially with heterosexuals because they usually hold anti-homosexual attitudes. You get angry at the way heterosexuals talk about and treat homosexuals and often openly stand up for homosexuals. You are happy to wear badges that bear slogans such as "How dare you presume I'm heterosexual!" You believe it is more important to listen to the opinion of homosexuals than heterosexuals.
Stage 6	You are prepared to tell anyone that you are a homosexual. You are happy about the way you are but feel that being a homosexual is not the most important part of you. You mix socially with fairly equal numbers of homosexuals and heterosexuals and with all of these people you are open about your homosexuality. You still get angry at the way homosexuals are treated, but not as much as you once did. You believe there are many heterosexuals who happily accept homosexuals and whose opinions are worth listening to. There are some things about a heterosexual way of life that seem worthwhile.

From: Cass, V. (1984) Homosexual identity formation: testing a theoretical model. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 20(2), 143-167

**Appendix 2.5 Information Sheet and Pre-Interview
Questionnaire for Non-Counsellors**

***An exploration of homosexual identity formation
in gay men from heterosexual marriages***

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are being invited to take part in an interview related to a research project exploring your coming out experience as a gay man who has been heterosexually married. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with the researcher. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is this Project about?

The focus of this project will be on the coming out experiences of gay men from heterosexual marriages. This is in order to explore their reasons for marriage, whether this was due to societal, legislative or other pressures, and the impact those have had on their lives in making that decision.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in an interview. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What should I expect if I take part?

If you decide to take part in this interview then you will be requested to complete a pre-interview questionnaire (enclosed with this Information Sheet) to confirm your eligibility to take part in the research. If selected for interview, I will contact you to agree a suitable date/time and venue for the interview. I will conduct the interview which is expected to last no more than 60 minutes. The interview will be audio-taped and you will receive a transcript of the interview.

You will be asked the following interview questions about your coming out experience, and I may refer to the responses you gave in the pre-interview questionnaire:

9. Can you give me an overview about your life that covers significant events, transition points and critical issues? Say anything you'd like about this.
10. Describe your development as a sexual person.
11. When were you first aware of your same-sex feelings or the sense that your sexual identity might be different from heterosexuals?
12. Was there a moment when you knew something in your life had to change?
13. What was your experience of coming-out to yourself? What made it difficult? What made it easier?

14. What has been your experience coming-out to others?
15. What have been the major barriers to you accepting yourself as gay?
16. Describe your relationship with the heterosexual and gay communities. How has your relationship in the heterosexual community been impacted by your coming out as gay?

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. The information you give during the course of this research is confidential. No names will appear in the transcript and research paper to protect your identity. All information collected from you will be kept under lock and key. Data storage and use will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You may not benefit directly from this study. However, we hope that what we can find out from this research will help us to improve counsellor's understanding of gay men from heterosexual marriages. And you can help us do this.

Will I be paid for taking part in the research?

No, but I will offer to reimburse actual travel expenses to a maximum of £10.

I'd like to take part in the research but my personal circumstances might prevent me from doing so. How do I check this out?

If you have specific access requirements then we can take those into account when we start to make arrangements for the interview. The interview will be conducted in English, but if English is not your first language then we can agree to extend the interview to take this into account. If there are any other concerns then I am happy to address them. To ensure equal participation, I will not ask if you have any personal requirements to be taken into account until after I have checked your eligibility and selected participants via the life experience questions in the pre-interview questionnaire.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

By completing the pre-interview questionnaire and/or talking in interview about your coming out experience, you may touch on memories that are painful for you. If you are impacted by what is explored then you may need to take this to your personal counsellor or to gay affirmative practices such as that provided by the Armistead Project, Body Positive and the Lesbian & Gay Foundation. In the end, only you can decide if you wish to take part.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results from this study may be reported in scientific papers, to be submitted to appropriate conferences or journals. In all publications the results will be written in such a way that your identity is protected.

Who is conducting the research?

Trevor Newton, as part of his MA in Clinical Counselling at the University of Chester.

How is the research being supervised?

The research has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Studies and Counselling at the University of Chester. The research is supervised by

<Supervisor's name>
Department of Social Studies and Counselling
University of Chester
Parkgate Road
Chester CH1 4BJ
nnnnnnn@chester.ac.uk

Who do I contact for further information?

Trevor Newton
nnnnnnn@chester.ac.uk

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE – Please complete and return if you are interested in participating in the research

Part 1: Respondent Contact Details	
Name	
Telephone number(s)	
Email	
Preferred method of contact	

Part 2: Respondent Eligibility	
<p>Note: The questions in part 2 of the pre-interview questionnaire are here to ensure that you meet the eligibility criteria for the research, which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are aged 18 or over • You are male • You have been married to a female at least once for at least 2 years • You have <u>not</u> been in a heterosexual relationship for at least 5 years • You identify your current sexual orientation as gay for at least 2 years • You self-identify at homosexual identity maturity stage 4 or above • You do <u>not</u> know the researcher, Trevor Newton • You have previously told your coming out story publicly or to a group <i>or</i> you are fully out at work <i>or</i> you work for a LGBT affiliated charity/company (e.g. the Armistead Project or the Lesbian & Gay Foundation) 	
Age	
Year of Birth	
Sex	

--

b. When were you first aware of your homosexual feelings? Was this during childhood or before/during/after your heterosexual marriage(s)?

--

c. How many times have you been heterosexually married? (For the purposes of this research, marriage includes religious or civil-registered marriages and common-law cohabitation between man and woman)

--

Part 4: Respondent's Declaration

The information in this pre-interview questionnaire is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate and I take full responsibility for it.

I have read the covering letter attached to this questionnaire and the Information Sheet.

I give permission for the anonymised information in parts 2 and 3 of this questionnaire to be referred to in interview and used in the research. This permission is given even if I am not selected for interview.

Nevertheless, I am aware that I can withdraw my consent, as detailed in the Information Sheet.

Name	
Initialed/Signed	
Date	

Homosexual Identity Maturity Stage Descriptions

Pre-Stage 1	<i>You believe you are a heterosexual and never question this. You rarely, if ever, wonder "Am I heterosexual?" You do not believe that homosexuality has anything to do with you personally.</i>
Stage 1	You are not sure who you are. You are confused about what sort of person you are and where your life is going. You ask yourself the questions "Who am I?," "Am I really a heterosexual?" You sometimes feel, think, or act in a homosexual way, but would rarely, if ever, tell anyone about this. You're fairly sure that homosexuality has something to do with you personally.
Stage 2	You feel that you probably are a homosexual, although you're not definitely sure. You realise that this makes you different from other people and you feel distant or cut off from them. You may like being different or you may dislike it and feel very alone. You feel you would like to talk to someone about "feeling different." You are beginning to think that it might help to meet other homosexuals but you're not sure whether you really want to or not. You don't want to tell anyone about the fact that you might be a homosexual, and prefer to put on a front of being completely heterosexual.
Stage 3	You feel sure you're a homosexual and you put up with, or tolerate this. You see yourself as a homosexual for now but are not sure about how you will be in the future. You are not happy about other people knowing about your homosexuality and usually take care to put across a heterosexual image. You worry about other people's reactions to you. You sometimes mix socially with homosexuals, or would like to do this. You feel a need to meet others like yourself.
Stage 4	You are quite sure you are a homosexual and you accept this fairly happily. You are prepared to tell a few people about being a homosexual (such as friends, family members, etc.) but you carefully select whom you will tell. You feel that other people can be influential in making trouble for homosexuals and so you try to adopt an attitude of getting on with your life like anyone else, and fitting in where you live and work. You can't see any point in confronting people with your homosexuality if it's going to embarrass all concerned. A lot of the time you mix socially with homosexuals.
Stage 5	You feel proud to be a homosexual and enjoy living as one. You like reading books and magazines about homosexuals, particularly if they portray them in a good light. You are prepared to tell many people about being a homosexual and make no attempt to hide this fact. You prefer not to mix socially with heterosexuals because they usually hold anti-homosexual attitudes. You get angry at the way heterosexuals talk about and treat homosexuals and often openly stand up for homosexuals. You are happy to wear badges that bear slogans such as "How dare you presume I'm heterosexual!" You believe it is more important to listen to the opinion of homosexuals than heterosexuals.
Stage 6	You are prepared to tell anyone that you are a homosexual. You are happy about the way you are but feel that being a homosexual is not the most important part of you. You mix socially with fairly equal numbers of homosexuals and heterosexuals and with all of these people you are open about your homosexuality. You still get angry at the way homosexuals are treated, but not as much as you once did. You believe there are many heterosexuals who happily accept homosexuals and whose opinions are worth listening to. There are some things about a heterosexual way of life that seem worthwhile.

From: Cass, V. (1984) Homosexual identity formation: testing a theoretical model. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 20(2), 143-167

Appendix 2.6 Interview Questions

1. Can you give me an overview about your life that covers significant events, transition points and critical issues? Say anything you'd like about this.
2. Describe your development as a sexual person.
3. When were you first aware of your same-sex feelings or the sense that your sexual identity might be different from heterosexuals?
4. Was there a moment when you knew something in your life had to change?
5. What was your experience of coming-out to yourself? What made it difficult? What made it easier?
6. What has been your experience coming-out to others?
7. What have been the major barriers too you accepting yourself as gay?
8. Describe your relationship with the heterosexual and gay communities. How has your relationship in the heterosexual community been impacted by your coming out as gay?

Adapted from Bates (2010). Questions 1-6 unchanged; questions 7 & 8 changed to remove reference to African-American community; change gender from lesbian to gay and remove reference to bisexuality.

Appendix 2.7 Interview Schedule

Introductions

Informed consent

- Re-check that taping of the interview is ok & put recorder(s) on
- Confirm that participant has read the Information Sheet and answer any further questions they may have
- Review pre-interview questionnaire & obtain signature
- Review consent form & obtain signature
- Advise participant of their right to pause or stop the interview at any time, and that they have the right not to answer any specific question
- Hand a copy of questions and Cass Stage descriptions to the participant, advising that there is significant overlap with the questions

Main questions

1. Can you give me an overview about your life that covers significant events, transition points and critical issues? Say anything you'd like about this, *but keep in mind that we are exploring your coming out story, so please maintain a focus on describing major life events in your sexual development*
 - a. What is your heterosexual marital history, how many times were you married
 - b. What jumps out as you as major turning points, milestones, hurdles or crises in your sexual development?
 - c. What caused you sleepless nights and/or anxiety?
 - d. Is there anything in your sexual development that you regret or wish happened differently?
 - e. What in your sexual development do you **not** have any regrets about?
2. Describe your development as a sexual person, *how have you sexually developed? What were those sexual milestones?*
 - a. Who did you first have sexual feelings for a) a man and b) a woman?
 - b. Were your first sexual feelings/experience with a man or a woman?
 - c. Did you see yourself as straight to begin with, then gay?
 - d. Did you feel you were bisexual for a time?
 - e. Did you experiment with your orientation before, during and after your marriage(s)
 - f. What was your experience of your sexual orientation before, during and after your marriage(s)?
3. When were you first aware of your same-sex feelings or the sense that your sexual identity might be different from heterosexuals?
 - a. As a child, were you aware whether homosexuality was legal or illegal in the country that you grew up in. Do you recall this influencing your feelings about being gay

- b. When were you first aware of their homosexual feelings: was this during childhood, teenage years, at school or university or adulthood; before/during/after your heterosexual marriage(s)?
- c. What did this feeling "different from the others" mean to you? How did you explain this to yourself? Did you do this alone or did you have support from someone you could trust?
- d. What is your coming out "story" (*make reference to Cass stage model and explore participant's experience in the stages, emphasising that the participant is unlikely to have experienced moving through the stages linearly*)
 - i. *Refer participant to definition of pre-stage 1 & stage 1.* How old were you when you moved from pre-stage 1 to stage 1? Describe this time in your life
 - ii. How long did you stay in stage 1? Describe this time in your life
 - iii. *Refer participant to definition of stage 2.* Can you remember this stage in your life? How long did this stage last? Describe this time in your life. Do you recall having these feelings before you were married?
 - iv. *Refer participant to definition of stage 3.* Can you remember this stage in your life? How long did this stage last? Describe this time in your life. When did this stage happen in relation to your marriage?
 - v. Did you experience these stages one after the other, or are they all mixed up?
 - vi. *Refer participant to definition of stage 4.* Does this describe you now? What do you want to add?
 - vii. *Refer participant to definition of stage 5.* Which of the items in this description do you identify with? What do you want to add?
 - viii. *Refer participant to definition of stage 6.* Which of the items in this description do you identify with? What do you want to add?
 - ix. Which stage would you describe yourself at for the majority of the time, and why?
- 4. Was there a moment when you knew something in your life had to change?
 - a. What was the trigger for you leaving your marriage?
 - b. Was there a critical moment when you knew you had to face up to your sexuality?
 - c. Did you trigger the change, or did someone else trigger it?
- 5. What was your experience of coming-out to yourself? What made it difficult? What made it easier? What influence did the following people have on how you viewed your sexuality?
 - a. Parents/Siblings
 - b. Friends
 - c. Teachers at school/Bosses at work/Culture at work
 - d. Religious beliefs
- 6. What has been your experience of coming-out to others?
 - a. With your ex-wife & children
 - b. With extended family members

- c. With friends
- d. With work colleagues
- e. Are these people fully/partially/not accepting of your sexual orientation? Has their acceptance changed over time?
- f. Did your anxieties about coming out match your actual experiences?
 - i. Can you give me an example of a good coming-out experience?
 - ii. Can you give an example of a bad coming-out experience?
 - iii. What would you say was the worst experience you have encountered in coming out to another person?
- 7. What have been the major barriers to you accepting yourself as gay?
 - a. Have you experienced homophobic bullying, hate incidents or hate crime - by yourself and/or with/about your gay partner
 - b. Did you experience any feelings of shame or guilt about your homosexuality? How did you overcome these?
- 8. Describe your relationship with the heterosexual and gay communities. How has your relationship in the heterosexual community been impacted by your coming out as gay?
 - a. Do you socialise/move exclusively in the gay community or do you find yourself integrated within the heterosexual community?
 - b. Are you and your gay partner fully accepted in the heterosexual community?

Conclusion

- Ask participant if there is anything else they would like to state
- Ask participant if they have been touched by anything discussed. If required, point participant towards their personal counsellor or gay affirmative therapy such as provided by Armistead Project, Body Positive and Lesbian & Gay Foundation
- Give participant rough idea of when to expect a transcription of the interview
- Reimburse actual travel expenses to a maximum of £10
- Thank participant for taking part in the research

Appendix 2.8 Consent Form

University of Chester

M. A. in Clinical Counselling Research

Consent Form Audio Recording of Interview

Ihereby give my consent for the details of a written transcript based on an audio recorded interview with myself and Trevor Newton to be used in preparation and as part of my research dissertation for the M. A. in Clinical Counselling at the University of Chester. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous and that all personally identifiable information will remain confidential and separate from the research data. I further understand that the transcript may be seen by Counselling Tutors and the External Examiner for the purpose of assessment and moderation. I also understand that all these people are bound by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy.

I understand that I will have access to the transcribed material should I wish to and would be able to delete or amend any part of it. I am aware that I can stop the interview at any point, or ultimately withdraw the interview within one month of my being provided with a copy of my audiotape. Upon completion of the research study the audiotape will be offered to me, or, by prior agreement with me, destroyed in accordance with university policy.

Excerpts from the transcript will be included in the dissertation and will exclude any personally identifiable material. Copies of the dissertation will be held at the University of Chester Library and may be made available electronically through the university's digital archive system.

Without my further consent some or all of the material may be used for publication and/or presentation at conferences and seminars. Every effort will be made to ensure complete anonymity.

Finally, I believe I have been given sufficient information about the nature of the research, including any possible risks, and have had a chance to check out any questions or concerns with the researcher, to give my informed consent to participate.

Signed (Participant)

Date

Signed (Researcher)

Date

Appendix 2.9 Selection Criteria

Data was collected in the pre-interview questionnaire to aid selection of eligible participants. I sought confirmation that the respondent met the inclusion and exclusion criteria in terms of age; sex; number of years & times married; current sexual orientation & duration; whether they were currently practising as a counsellor/therapist and had access to supervision and personal counselling; the homosexual identity maturity stage they mainly identified themselves in and whether there was an existing relationship with the researcher.

I also sought details of respondent life experiences (what was their age when homosexuality became legal in their country; the timing of discovery of homosexual feelings in relation to their marriage and the number of heterosexual marriages they have been in). This data would be used if there were too many respondents to ensure that participants from different life experiences were included in the research. In the end, this was not necessary, as there were only just sufficient respondents within the data collection period I had planned.

The main exclusion criteria were that there must be no existing dual relationship between researcher and participants; the participant must declare that he is not currently in a heterosexual relationship; and that the participant must not identify his sexual orientation maturity at stages 1-3 (see Appendices 2.4 & 2.5 for definitions of each stage).

Appendix 2.10 Research Timetable

I created a timetable for the dissertation based on Hart (2005). The time when I actually did the work varied from my plans (all dates in 2011, unless otherwise specified):

Activity	Planned Period	Actual Period
<i>Literature Search & Review</i>	<i>February – July</i>	
<i>Prepare for and pilot interview</i>	<i>February – March</i>	<i>February – May</i>
<i>Select data analysis method</i>	<i>March – April</i>	<i>July - August</i>
<i>Interviews & Transcription (Data Collection)</i>	<i>April - June</i>	<i>June – July</i>
<i>Data Analysis</i>	<i>May – July</i>	<i>August - October</i>
<i>Literature, Methods & Data Collection Chapters</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>October - November</i>
<i>Findings & Conclusions Chapters</i>	<i>July – August</i>	<i>December</i>
<i>Draft & Final Versions</i>	<i>September - October</i>	<i>Feb 2012</i>

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggest timetabling 12-18 days for the literature review, and Dallos and Vetere (2005) suggest between 10-15 hours transcription per interview. Hart's (2005) estimate of 75 days to undertake the research compared favourably against my 90 days availability.

Appendix 2.11 Audit Trail of Data Collection & Data Analysis

This appendix is a collection of memories, journaling and thought processes. I have tidied it up to some degree, but deliberately not polished it up – my thoughts, feelings and processes during the data collection and data analysis were anything but tidy and this is a reflexive audit of that time.

Data Collection

I jotted down my thoughts immediately after interviewing two of the participants, and present these unchanged, *with later expansions to you, the reader, in italics, for clarification.*

Yellow (22/6)

Doctor seeing evidence of abuse – needed as an external trigger, like myself, I needed to be rescued, I couldn't rescue myself. Really felt this even though it wasn't my story.

Real fluidity in orientation, no hangups etc until outed by wife, then the shame, which revisited/retouched him prior to interview & discussed there.

No labels on self – Navratilova quote!

Labels are for filing, labels are for clothing, labels are not for people.

Martina Navratilova (Anonymous, 1988)

AIDS dynamic – new hate icon

Societal, justice – kids & gays don't mix. Heteronormative, homophobic prejudices at play "why would I want my son to be gay – and face all this?"

Initially thought this is not my experience, but there were some elements.

Strong stage 5 identification (*Cass model* – see appendices 1.2 & 1.3)

<use t-shirt slogans in the SV (*Cass stage 5*) literature review section – see appendix 4.2 *Creative Synthesis – Gay Pride*>

Blue (30/6)

Only interview via skype, couple of glitches but felt connected and with less interruptions/distractions than some interviews

Again, material brought in by client unexpected and so glad had made it a semi-structured interview to allow that flexibility to cover the material the interviewee wanted to bring. I could never have second-guessed it.

As the hour came up it was so tempting to close the interview, but need to reflect on what was said after that 1 hour cutoff as this data would have been lost to the research for the sake of an arbitrary restriction on our time.

Felt it a real privilege to talk, to hear his story (and those of others). New materials on queerness (not just L or G or B) but Q as well. Very anti-labelling again. *L: lesbian, G: gay, B: bisexual, Q: questioning (sexuality)*

Campaigning and education for trainee counsellors – part of recommendations?

Excitement at the potential of an audience for my research outside of the strict academic world, in the LGBT therapy association mentioned in interview.

I got myself in a pickle about the names I was selecting for the participant's friends and family. I started with trying to think of names of people with the first letter being 6 down from the original, but this started to unravel I found that I needed to use names like Xavier! I settled with obtaining a random set of 50 of the most popular boys and girls names from random-name-generator.info, and substituting these. I removed the names of my ex-wife, my son and my daughter from the list. Even then, I raised my eyebrow when the name Ernest came up. Would Blue be ok if I called his partner of 30 years Ernest? I accepted this twist of fate when I recalled that this was the name of the central character in Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Ernest", so it did have good provenance after all.

I finished the 6.5 hours, and 55,400 words of transcription one day later than planned and I spent the remaining working day of the week sorting in my mind what the sections of the dissertation might look like & consist of by looking at literature, Ashton et al and a UoC (*University of Chester*) dissertation structure.

I started the transcription process almost immediately after the first interview, but for four weeks time spent on this was sporadic. I then had a "transcription fortnight" when I did little else, and at the end of it, I had a distinct touch of cabin-fever and spent a large part of the weekend recovering on the edge of Dartmoor and with friends outdoors.

Having already completed the transcription of Red, I spent most of this fortnight transcribing the remainder of the participants. I found it hard, tiring work, but not the mind-numbing exercise that I had feared. I found myself re-living the emotions that were shared during the interviews and the way I had organised my work meant that I was often hit by the emotions of a number of interviews in the same “working” day. This had a draining effect on my emotional wellbeing and I was glad to be able to get out of the flat and into nature on a regular basis.

Heuristic: sense of interviewing green, transcribing orange, arranging blue & dealing with a new respondent was too much of a heady mix, too powerful. Overwhelming messages & data. Data overload, not immersion. Add to that, Obama’s message (*large excerpt included appendix 1.4*) – mindblowing!

I had the panic of one participant expressing a desire to withdraw his consent on receiving the transcript after a few heart-stopping moments he reconsidered.

Having completed the transcriptions, I wanted to understand the scale of the task ahead.

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Duration of Interview</i>	<i>Words in Transcript</i>
Red	1:11:05	9,784
Orange	0:51:31	8,432
Yellow	1:43:08	13,320

Green	1:20:51	13,820
Blue	1:23:50	10,080
	6:30:25	55,436

Ouch! I was beginning to hate my participants for talking so long and so quickly and for telling their story so passionately and powerfully that I could connect and re-connect with their pain, hurt and sorrow – a reflection of the feelings that I have for my own story.

Data Analysis (freewriting)

This is a collection of memories, journaling and thought processes during the data analysis stage, and have reduced the materials significantly as they originally took more than 12 pages here. *Anything is italics, is to help explain further my thought processes at the time.*

Having completed the interviews and transcriptions I was left with the daunting task of data analysis. It felt as though it were a rubix cube, an impossible task and with no idea where to start or how to perform it. This was something that I had skimmed over in my research proposal, waiting for inspiration. But now was the time and inspiration was short on the ground. I asked myself what data, what themes will I find, then asked myself what data and themes should I expect? That took me onto a search. Of course there was the CASS model, which would give me ideas about how people think in the various stages of development of their sexual identity (feeling different, social alienation, societal expectations,

self-hatred etc). Good start! But also, what about the marriage, the foreclosure of that identity development? What have I got about that? Of course, I had Bates, and a quick search of articles that I had already found gave me material to work on, teasing out words, themes, ideas from the texts of Cass, Langdridge & Davies for HIF and Alessi, Blais etc for internalised homophobia, oppression, own & societal attitudes to homosexuality ?? for MOM, Higgins for relationships with self, wife, children, gay & straight communities, Rowen & Malcolm for sexual freedom & experimentation before, during & after marriage, Blais, Higgins et al for reasons for marriage, self-esteem, self-disgust. And the question formed "what is the impact on the self as a result of the length of time spent in foreclosure?"

After only a couple of hours work, I had been able to come up with a set of themes that I might expect to see from the data:

Theme	Sub-Themes
Bates' 7 themes	Sex education; memories; straight expectations; religious upbringing; discovering the missing link; overcoming ourselves; who to come out to
Stage 1: Identity Confusion	Feeling different; incongruence
Stage 2: Identity Comparison	Finding new meaning in life; passing as straight (including marriage); foreclosure; resistance to homosexual self; self-hatred; social alienation; social expectations
Stage 3: Identity Tolerance	Sexual experimentation (freedom vs inhibition; with men before, during and after marriage); loss of marriage; seeking contact; self-disgust; sense of belonging in gay community
Stage 4: Identity Acceptance	Immersion in gay culture; selective coming out
Stage 5: Identity Pride	Acceptance; anger at homophobia; gay

	pride; pride activities and politics; "we are not sick, society is wrong"
Stage 6: Identity Synthesis	Congruence of feelings, thoughts, actions and behaviour; dissolution of "them" and "us"; integration: gay is a part, not the whole; united private and public selves
Relationships with...	Self; wife (including motivation for marriage; awareness & disclosure during marriage; separation & divorce); children; straight world; gay world (late entry into)
Social Construction	Sense of self (guilt; shame; self-esteem; "who am I?"; "where do I belong?") Localised societal pressure; parental influence of family norms; institutional homophobia; internalised homophobia; homosexuality is an illness

I thought that this would be a good measure, a good tool for critiquing the data that I will get from the interviews. I can comment on whether I found data that I expected to find, based on the literature, comment on data that I hadn't expected to find. What sort of "data fit" would there be?

Then I thought that, before I start to get into examining the data itself, I needed to clarify the analysis methodology. I had seen that Ashton, Collins & Humphreys had all structured their discussion around themes that emerged from their respective interviews, but how did they approach the data analysis? I had found the end of the ball of string and could start unravelling the mysteries of data analysis methodologies by reviewing their dissertations as well as my own literature search on the subject.

Reviewed the literature I had on data analysis methodology. Although more informed and slightly clearer, I was still confused about which methodology to select as it seemed to be an either/or situation, but decided to leave it there on the back burner, as such.

Started to review the transcripts and highlight emotive thoughts, phrases and themes. Saw this as an iterative process, something to be done a number of times, refining my understanding and feeling for the data.

Completed the review of the transcripts and felt that I was getting closer to the data, but also aware that I needed to give myself space too, to help the assimilation of the data.

I reviewed what Ashton, Collins & Humphreys had to say about data analysis and it clicked that this wasn't an either/or but what was required was a skilled blend of the constant comparative method described by Maykut & Morehouse and the heuristic, "let it soak in approach" advocated by Moustakas. Data analysis wasn't about eating foods separately prepared and then placed in front of you, it was about pairing flavours in a dish to produce something that was better than its constituent parts. What we end up with, as Segnit (2010, p10) states, "is a patchwork of facts, connections, impressions and recollections, designed less to tell you exactly what to do than to provide the spark for your own recipe or adaptation."

A fellow student had talked about wordle (give explanation from the website - *Wordle is a toy for generating "word clouds" from text that you provide. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text*) and I thought pushing the transcript through the package seemed like a good idea. It would highlight the most

used words. On looking at the results, I was struck not only that I should be looking at the words that were the biggest (and therefore the most common), but also the other words – what the participant said only a few times, or reluctantly, that all words should be examined, in the whole, after all this wasn't a quantitative study – where the numbers count, but qualitative, where the sentiments behind the words count. Many of the biggest words were those like: really, think, know, just, sort, like – idioms of speech, so these were ignored below. There were other words that just “spoke to me” and also words that were uncannily juxtaposed.

Participant	Big Words	Other Words	Juxtaposed Words
Red	Gay, time, (wife's name), children, relationship	Different, felt, family, guilty, love	“told parents”
Orange	Gay, straight, marriage, need, want	Wife, time, lucky, airline, emotional	“way people think”
Yellow	(son's name), feeling, felt, school, gay	Relationship, friends, court, time	“people different”, “really gay”, “remember school”
Green	Gay, men, remember, think	Children, feel, normal, better, never	
Blue	Gay, people, together, always, time	School, relationship, family, life	“time married”, “first love”, “men wanted”, “relationships yeah”, “knew people gay”

But some of the words were tiny, barely visible, but absolutely enormous in the interview.

Red's “Dad” who he felt would reject him totally from his life because of his gayness. “Regret” – a theme picked up by most of the participants.

"Normal" – how he struggled with his non-normalcy through his life.

"Fantasise" those scenarios he made in his mind about his friends.

Orange's "happy" at being gay, and his smooth coming out – his was not traumatic. "Diversity" and his stance on his right to be different to the standard gay-scene gay.

Yellow's "snowflake", his first recollection of him feeling different from the other boys at school. "Shame", causing him nightmares between arranging and undertaking the interview. "Bowie" the identity he adopted as a shield against the homophobic bullying at school. "AIDS" the time he lived in and the prejudice he recounted from the judiciary system.

Green's "camp" and his hostility to that gay stereotype.

Blue's "queer" hiding the huge topic of queer theory and queer identity. His "party" marking a major transition point in his life. "therapy" belittling his 40 years in that line of work.

Initial Coding

I took the transcription notes from each interview and then started to put these into a spreadsheet, detailing participant, paragraph number from transcript and initial thoughts on themes to start the categorisation process:

- Red – long story, as in therapy, look past the story to the "red thread", what is important to the participant and therefore to the research?
- Orange – finding it difficult to get the participant to give the information, already asking the first supplementary question 7 minutes in – not my experience in the practice interviews!

- Green – 39: no access, as for straight dads, but with alternative ammunition/justification on the mother's part (as with yellow)? 43: semi-structured – participant is going off-topic to their hotspots or touchstones, what they are really worked up about & therefore what the significant points are in their construction of the world as they see it today & therefore is valuable to include. Shuttered from the gay life in the same way as he was shuttered from it when he was straight? How well adjusted is he? – this is not a question to be answered, judgemental – another study perhaps? 47: similar to Blue, when I don't have to write this dissertation, when LGBT therapy won't be necessary, but today, it is – that is the reality.
- Blue – 9/10: this is real therapist talk. Is this too close to the coal-face, too processed? What was his world like at the time, not now, later on, when he has had time/opportunity to re-frame it? Part of the potential limitation described in research proposal. 29: possible problem/limitation with the study – counsellors and therapists have already deconstructed brick by brick their previous understanding of the world, whereas a non-professional might be able to recount a more immediate construction of his reality. 51: SV & SVI (*Cass' stage 5 & 6: identity pride and synthesis*) at the same time. Blue and me in my research. Different take by different people on the questions and me allowing them that latitude to see where they want to go, again, a reflection of PC (*person-centred counselling*) practice.

Even then the whole process of trying to categorise the data, put labels on what the participants had said, seemed to be too restrictive, too artificial. I needed to get a deeper feeling of the data first. I decided to copy out all the text that I had highlighted, the words that had spoken to me, from each of the participants and put them together into a single document. With that exercise I reduced the data word-count from 55,400 to 28,000. It felt like progress, but there was still too much there to absorb and make sense of.

A session with my personal counsellor highlighted my desire “to be impatient” for results in my personal life and I reflected afterwards that this was also the case in the dissertation. I re-read my 2nd year assignments, and there were 3 references that seemed pertinent to the task in hand. Kort (2003a, p34) quotes the Talmud “We see the world as we are, not as it is”; Deurzen-Smith (2004, p???) not a single world, but world(s) – proposal?; Tolle (2003, p34) asks us “What are the stories, the fictions from which you derive your sense of self? Your unhappiness ultimately arises not from the circumstances of your life but from the conditioning of your mind”; and according to Yalom (2008, p201) “in time you will inevitably arrive at the deep structures of existence or, to use Paul Tillich’s term, *ultimate concerns*.” In Yalom’s view “four ultimate concerns are particularly germane to the practice of therapy: death, isolation, meaning in life and freedom.”

Does the data contain themes about how the participants see the world? Which world, and when? How did the participants derive their sense of

self? Tillich's isolation & freedom had shouted out at me from the interviews. I also thought about how, through the passage of time, the world seems to be a different place, and that sense of self would change over a lifetime. I came up with the idea of looking at the data in this light. What was that world like for the participant: as a child, as a teenager, during marriage, during separation and divorce, and today? I sorted and sifted the data into these themes, found subthemes within them and suddenly the data appeared to be more manageable.

Tentative Themes	Tentative Subthemes
How I saw the world as a child	Feeling different, feeling wrong Feeling alone & isolated Feeling confused Feeling connected Childhood abuse
How I saw the world in my teens	Feeling different, feeling wrong, I'm not gay Feeling alone & isolated Feeling confused Feeling connected Homophobia
How I saw the world when I was married	Feeling connected to/within the marriage Feeling different, feeling wrong Pornography & Internet Experimentation
How I saw the world when I separated and divorced	Towards the end of the marriage The end of the marriage Coming Out Separated Being Gay 90s society, AIDS & institutional homophobia
How I see the world today	Regrets, no regrets Gay Society Gay Pride Homophobia Coming Out

It also became clear to me that I could "cut the cake" in a number of different ways, but going back to the research title again, my stated intention was to explore how the participants developed their gay identity

over their lifetime in the context of their heterosexual marriage. At this point, I had a deep sense that the themes, at least, were right. Some of the sub-themes were repeated, but the participants' sense of those sub-themes had changed over their lifetime and it was important to the research to document this development.

I needed to physically touch the data so I printed it off, each theme on different coloured paper, in order to confirm sub-themes and get to grips with it further.

The journaling stopped here, but for me, I was deep in the data explication stage, refining the themes and sub-themes, time and time again....

Appendix 2.12 Cover Email for Draft Results Chapter

Hello <participant>,

I have finally got to the point of sifting through and collating the quotes from all the participants and got it down to a manageable size, but expect to need to cut it further to get within the word-count for the dissertation. I'm sending you the draft "Results" chapter & appendix in its entirety. This is how it will be seen and helps you to see your quotes in context with the other participants.

Please note that I haven't shared your email address with any of the other participants or any other details, so you do remain anonymous.

As a reminder, you are <participant's anonymised name>, and I attach a copy of your transcript for you too.

I hope that you are comfortable with what I have extracted from the interview in your name. If you have any comments then please get back to me before <date>.

Many thanks again for helping me in this research.

Trevor

Appendix 3.1 Participant Portraits

Red was born in the early 1970s, knew that he was gay at age 11, was married once and came out mid-2000s. He identifies at Cass stage 6. He appeared to me to be someone who had fully felt the constraints of society's expectations on him. His childhood experience of his sexual development conforms to the CASS model extremely closely. He reported feeling socially alienated from his school mates, he "knew" that how he felt was wrong, and yet also knew he could not speak to anyone about it. His teenage years were racked with guilt and shame about his emerging sexuality that he was trying to reject and control by literally forcing himself into heterosexual relationships. He finally found the woman who he would have children with and marry, fully aware of his unexplored sexual feelings for men. His openness to his wife about his sexual doubts initially helped him in the marriage, but these finally got the better of him whilst seeing a workplace counsellor. His expectation at this point was that he would lose everything and he feared coming out to his father the most.

Orange was born in the early 1950s, was married once and came out late 1980s. He identifies at Cass stage 4. He reported being totally unaware of his gay sexual orientation until after he was married. He worked in the airline business, where he described "being gay was as normal as being straight". He had a chance encounter with a straight-acting gay man then he began to identify himself as gay. He appeared to me to be "not your typical" married gay man, and is placed in that "10%" of gay men who did not have a problem coming out. He has rejected the "tell everyone I'm gay" approach that is grounded in Cass' stage 5, identity pride, on the basis of personal choice and

freedom. He has experienced coming out to friends and work colleagues as extremely easy and does not see the need to tell his family.

Yellow was born in the early 1960s, was married once and came out late-1980s. He identifies at Cass stage 6. He reported that at the age of 8 he felt different from other boys. At high school he experienced homophobic bullying and found that the only way to survive it, was to "be it". He started experimenting sexually in his early teens with both girls and boys, and did not put any labels on himself, sexually. His experience of marriage was harrowing. After the birth of his son, his wife became physically violent and abusive to him and it was only when the GP challenged him, on a medical examination "are you being abused?" that he was able to start to disentangle himself from the marriage. He also reported many instances of homophobia, prejudice and ignorance in the judicial system in battling for access to his son, in the workplace, as well as hate crimes against him and his partner by a gang of youths.

Green was born in the early 1960s, was married once and came out in early-2000s. He identifies at Cass stage 6. He reported that at school age he was aware of something different about him, but not sure what that was. He grew up with no positive images of gay men, and recalls his mother saying it was a "cruel trick of nature" and that "gays lived in London". He experimented with a boy in his early teens then "put that to one side" and went out with girls. He got married and had kids because "that is what you did". He experimented sexually during the marriage with a non-camp man, that he could identify and feel a real emotional connection with. He experienced a real struggle coming to terms with

his sexuality whilst still within his marriage. When his wife said “I think you’re gay”, he felt normal for the first time in 40 years. He does not identify with a lot of aspects of the gay scene; he rejects the gay stereotyping of men; the availability of casual sex through the internet, skype and gaydar; and gay pride marches.

Blue was born in the late 1940s, was married once and separated early-1980s. He identifies at Cass stage 6. He described his childhood being brought up in children’s homes, foster homes, with an alcoholic father and an older step-brother who was sent away. At school and children’s homes, he was bullied for being different and was sexually abused by predatory adults. He experimented sexually with boys and girls from an early age and felt he developed his own ethics in the void from his parents. He did not label himself as straight, gay or bisexual, and did not experience any discomfort about his sexuality. He approached his marriage by consulting his heart and had a deep desire to create a loving, happy family. He stayed faithful to his wife until she left him. He brought to the interview a deep understanding of LGBT history, queer theory and discussed the very poor experience of coverage of LGBT issues in therapy training.

Appendix 3.2 Results - Further Quotes

The word count for the dissertation meant that I did not have space to include many of the powerful things that the participants said in interview. I include these here

I'd have these crushes on friends ... in my head, I'd be telling myself "this is my boyfriend" (Red, 7)

I began to hate other people who identified themselves as being gay. I was extremely homophobic (Red 18)

I'd say things like "things happen when I see other boys" or "I like other boys in that way" but I would never use the word gay. It was a word that I couldn't use. (Red 35)

I told <wife's name> that I'd got issues with my sexuality; that I was attracted to men, probably more attracted to men than I was to women. ... there seemed to be this real connection and this trust that, actually, she knows about me but she still wants to be with me (Red 43)

this organisation ... supported me when it came to me not knowing what could happen to the children and things that people had said to me the kids are going to be taken off you because you're gay (Red 68)

my first experience with a person who was supposed to be gay, but I doubt very much was, had a tendency to take advantage of gay people, was really horrible (Orange 29)

I thought, I've almost got the golden chalice here, it's all slotted into place because the one guy I thought was going to give me trouble was actually the one that gave me the best amount of support. ...they respected me for a person (Orange 41) Yeah, they got to know me first, then they just thought it's another facet and we don't care (Orange 42)

"I remember me and my friend really fancying him, you know at that age, we would rush to the ice-cream van just because we wanted to see him ... that was the first time that I felt physically attracted to a guy" (Yellow 15-18, aged 10)

I went completely overboard, really, I thought like, really the only way to survive this is "be it", you know ... I just picked an image, and right, David Bowie, people like him, he looks really different, really hard, people are not too sure if he's a pouf or not, so, I felt, about 13, I think "there you go, I'll be him" (Yellow 27)

At last, I thought, I loved being this different ... I thought "yes, this is it, this is how is how I'm going to survive, really" (Yellow 28)

I guess I saw it like putting on this sort of armour, ... then the floodgates opened. It was almost like "right, I am gay. I fancy him, I fancy him, I fancy" It was like, everywhere a man was, I could recognise that I was this pouf, I was this queer (Yellow 31)

I thought "gosh, this is where I need to be". It didn't matter if you were a pouf or a queer, I just felt ordinary. I felt like everyone else (Yellow 35)

It didn't matter what people said to me, or what they told me, or. I was becoming very much my own person really (right). I didn't really need to listen to anyone else (Yellow 37)

I just felt fully accepted, again, by people who may have been seen different by others, and, you know, it was just that feeling of belonging – I was getting more and more of that, I think (yeah) I was just getting more and more comfortable. (Yellow 40)

"you will never have Jack" ... "you're gay, they won't let you have him." ... I was left with nothing, ... I just went into this guilt mode really (Yellow 52)

"I remember going to the NCB workshops with my Dad and I remember seeing loads of these big naked men ... and I remember thinking that there was a connection there" (Green 5, aged 7-9)

I often wonder, did I have children to prove that I was a man, that I was a proper man. Is that why I had children? Did I get married, did I have children to prove I was a proper man? (Green 14)

it all started falling into place that, if you're a gay man, the only sexual satisfaction that you're realistically going to get is probably with another gay man. The sex that you would have with a woman is pretend-y sex, it's not, it's not real sex and it doesn't fulfil you (Green 17)

I said "yes, I'm gay". That was the very first time I'd said it out loud to lots of people (and) and they kind of really, and lots of people said, "oh, I thought you were anyway" (Green 22)

I'd never do that on skype, where you wave your willy on a camera to a stranger (Green 32)

I've got to such a stage now that if somebody said to me, do you know, if you wanted to, you could press this magic button and you'd turn straight, you'd become heterosexual, I wouldn't do that now because I'm really happy with who I am. (Green 34)

he's never seen his 2 daughter for 20 years because his wife won't allow it. ... I know that courts recognise that children, it's part of growing children needing to know who their fathers are, whether

their fathers are good or bad, need to know who their father is and where they came from (Green 39)

I mainly threw myself into being clever and succeeding at school and, you know, all that, when none of my family did anything academic (Blue 10)

"From quite an early age, I was regularly sexually abused by teachers and by men in the neighbourhood. I guess I was a classic, extremely vulnerable child who needed adult attention and, you know, ideal for predatory adults, always men (Blue 11)

I experimented quite a lot when I was in children's homes with, we would all get into bed together, we would all get naked together, we would all kind of, you know, experiment as kids (Blue 11)

I got so little direct teaching from my parents ... I've had to have my own ethics and my own views about everything and my own kind of values ... it's very useful to me because I don't accept rules from elsewhere (Blue 12)

One of the things she has said subsequently years later is that she left because she was so fearful that I would leave (Blue 25)

historically, other people categorise us in the first place. Until 1850, there was no was no such thing as a homosexual (hmm, yes, that's

right). The people who categorised us were not themselves homosexuals, they were pseudo-medical and pseudo-psychological people who were trying to categorise us on the basis of dysfunction so, you know, we've bought into that over the years, you know, to the idea that we're a separate people of some sort. But, actually, in all of history, in all of cultures, of course, some people at some times loved their own gender more than, you know, and of course for some people that remains always the case, for others that means that sometimes they're gay, sometimes for some people it's circumstantial and why do we have to say "this is what you are" rather than acknowledge that these are processes that we should respect (Blue 42)

I love it when we have (name of LGBT therapy association) meetings ... because we all know what we are talking about and I don't have to keep going about, you know, "what is cottaging?", "oh, right, let me tell you about what cottaging is" (Blue 52)

Appendix 4.1 Minor Study Limitations

The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed data to be raised that was not anticipated or repeated across the participants. One participant described his experience of childhood sexual abuse, but I have excluded this because it falls outside the scope of the research topic.

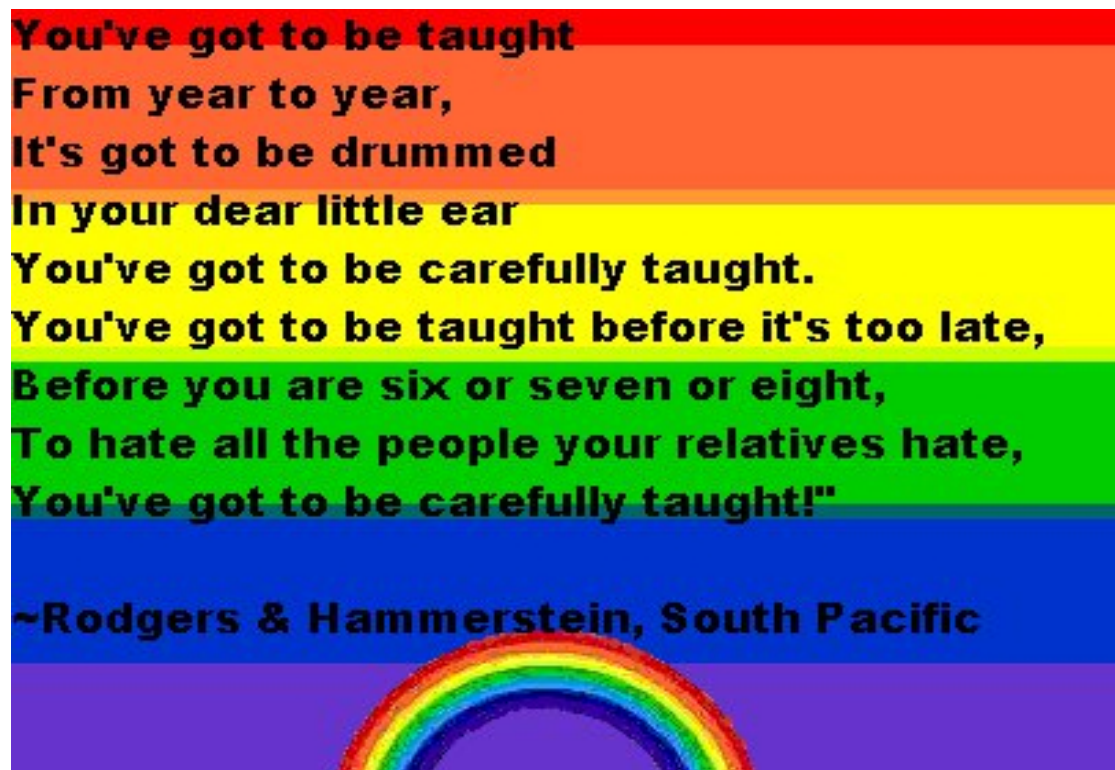
The participants were aged late 30s-60s, and mainly grew up in the UK. The sample is not representative of gay men who remain married, closeted or in denial as in studies by Alessi (2008) and Higgins (2002), or who identify as bisexual, as in Bates (2010). Additionally, reference is made only to the CASS model of HIF (Cass, 1979) whereas Bates (2010) refers to alternative models, and Adams & Phillips (2009) question the universal applicability of CASS, and similar models, to their participants.

With the exception of one article in French (Blais et al, 2004), my literature review consisted entirely of articles published in English. When I consider the influence of Spanish, Brazilian & Argentinian gay-genre films, I wonder what research is out there on this subject in Portuguese, Spanish and other languages.

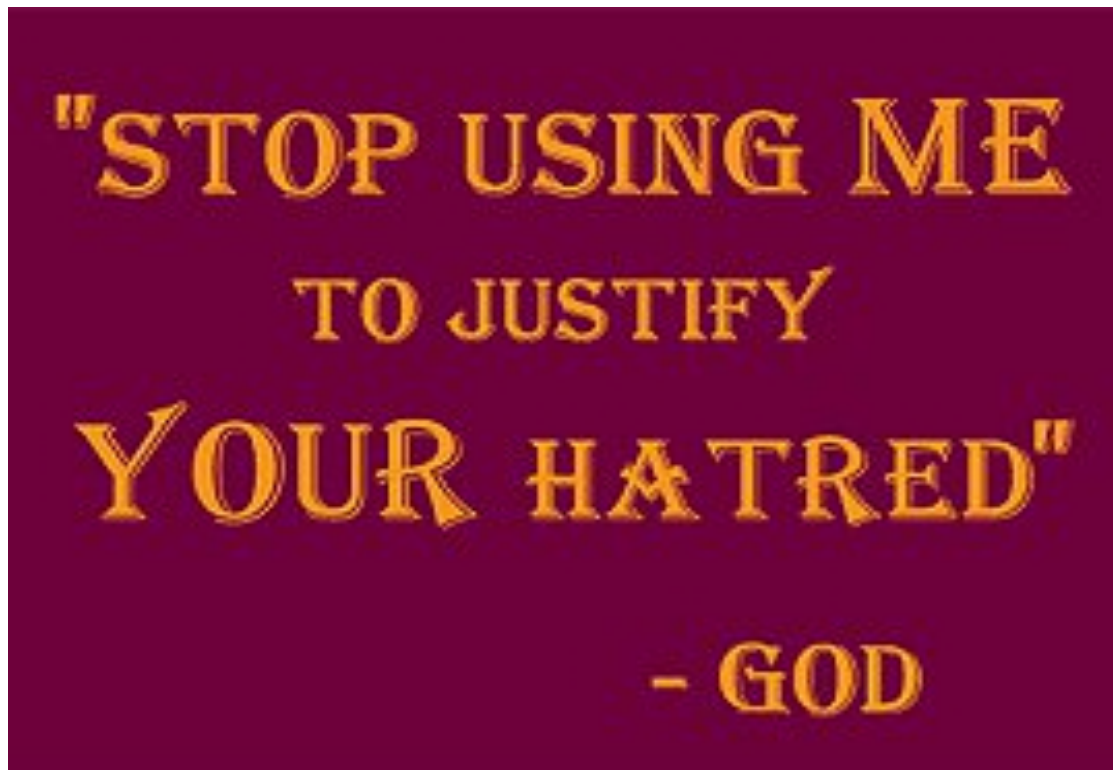
Appendix 4.2 Creative Synthesis & Gay Pride

Here is a small selection of pictures that I found on Facebook while writing this dissertation, which reflected some of the themes brought out in the literature review as well as from the interviews with the participants. These pictures evoked strong heart-felt responses within me.

Sincere thanks to "I'm not gay but I don't care if you are" and "Wipeout Homophobia on Facebook" facebook pages for their kind permission to use these pictures



Society teaches us to hate – ourselves and others – for being different



Society teaches us to hate – ourselves and others – for being different – sometimes using the name of others to justify the hate



Do I really need to add anything to this?



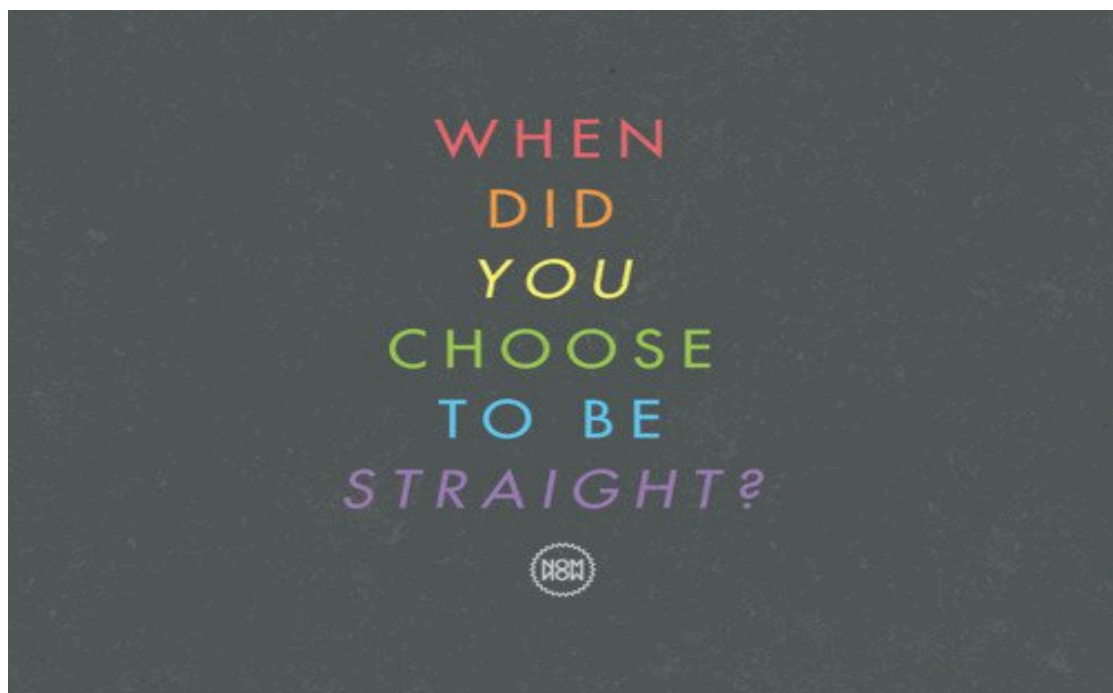
This is the ugly face of homophobia – the impact of people’s hatred of you simply for being different



Sometimes parents know and accept that you’re gay long before you’re ready to do the same. If only they had somehow let you know, then it would have saved so much heartache



Coming out used to mean losing your life in the UK. Fortunately, those days are long since gone. However in 2012, it's still illegal to be gay in eighty countries with five having the death penalty.



Identifying yourself as gay is not a choice – it's about accepting yourself for who and what you really are

Appendix 4.3 *Creative Synthesis & Spiritual Road Map*

At the end of the taught part of my counselling course, I drew a picture of myself, having crossed mountains and streams, indicating my personal growth and self-discovery during the course. I saw myself on the top of a hill, at a crossroads, with road signs but nothing written on them and therefore without any real sense of what I should do or where I should go next.

A couple of months later, after I had transcribed the interviews and was heavily involved in the literature review and data analysis, I drew the following spiritual road map at a workshop for gay men run by the Edward Carpenter Community. I described the roadmap as a map that meant something, but I wasn't sure what of. There was no key to the symbols on the map, what the colours meant, whether the size or colour of the shapes were important, or whether it was the gaps between the coloured shapes that signified the route I needed to take. I wasn't even sure which way up the map ought to be. Yet, somehow, it didn't seem to matter. After years of being too afraid to do what I wanted to do because of my fear about what others might think of me, I was starting on my journey through life.

My sincere thanks to the wonderful men of the Edward Carpenter Community who have helped and supported me in my coming out journey over the past few years.

